

## LIVESTOCK POISONING PLANTS

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Poisonous plants cause significant losses of livestock each year. It is important for livestock producers to know which poisonous plants occur on a given range or pasture and how they can be controlled or avoided. Undesirable effects may result from a single ingestion of a large amount of a poisonous plant but some plants are so toxic that very small amounts may result in severe disease or death. Other plants cause chronic poisoning only after ingestion over weeks or months.

Accurate plant identification is critical if a particular plant is suspected of causing problems. Diagnosing a plant poisoning can be difficult and must be done quickly. In many cases, clinical signs are nonspecific and post mortem lesions are not characteristic. The assistance of your veterinarian is crucial. Producers and farm managers, along with veterinarians and diagnosticians, play important roles and all contribute information that may be important to diagnose a poisoning case.

The California Animal Health and Food Safety (CAHFS) Laboratory has veterinary toxicologists that have diagnosed plants as the cause of toxosis in more than 600 submitted cases. The submissions include cattle, horses, pigs, goats and sheep.

If a plant toxicity is suspected:

- Work with your veterinarian to determine whether the animal's clinical sign may be a result of plant exposure.
- Collect the whole plant (if practical) or representative parts of the plant, including leaves, flowers, stems, roots and fruit and have it identified by a knowledgeable individual (local nursery, county agricultural commissioner, UC Cooperative Extension Advisor, veterinarian, diagnostic laboratory, etc.).
- Save suspect plant material or feed for possible future evaluation
- Once plants are identified, ask your veterinarian to contact a veterinary toxicologist for detailed consultation
- If the animal dies, submit it to a veterinary diagnostic laboratory

Some references associated with plant poisoning include:

Forero, L. G. Nader, A. Craigmill, J. Ditomaso, B. Puschner and J. Maas. 2011. Livestock Poisoning Plants of CA

Burrows, G.E. and R.J. Tyrl. 201. Toxic plants of North America. Ames: Iowa State University Press.

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