
PRODUCERS SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT POTENTIAL POISONING FROM PLANTS

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Late summer and fall often bring reports of cattle deaths due to ingestion of poisonous plants. Drought conditions will result in added deaths. These plants can be found in lots of pastures and are never eaten by cattle. Drought, overgrazing or sometimes curiosity will cause cattle to graze or consume these plants. One of the most frequently reported incidences of plant poisonings is the result of cattle consuming Perilla mint that has been allowed to grow in cattle pens.

Most producers associate toxic plants with the rapid onset of toxic symptoms, difficult breathing, loss of consciousness, vomiting, disorientation, and sometimes even death. Producers have been trained to watch for Perilla mint, an ornamental plant that escaped into the pasture. Perilla mint gives the classic poisonous plant symptoms and death. Many other common plants found in pastures have this potential. Common plants that can cause toxic symptoms include bracken fern, sickle pod, pokeweed or poke salad, cocklebur (when young), the night shades (Horsenettle and Bullnettle) and a plant found in pastures and hay fields as well, *Crotalaria*. *Crotalaria* is a pretty, upright plant with yellow flowers. It is easy to see and is very toxic. Jimsonweed is another toxic plant that is found often in barnyards, around corrals, and in other areas that do not have constant usage. Jimsonweed is sometimes chopped in silage and fed to animals. Jimsonweed seeds are also a source of toxins. These seeds and others are often found in seed screening.

Many poisonous ornamentals are found around the headquarters or around old abandoned home sites. Some of these are yew, oleander, yellow jessamine, lantana, and castor bean. Many of these attractive shrubs and plants can be deadly to cattle. A thorough identification should be done on plants that are grown in or on fence lines. Check old house places, and if there is any doubt about a plant, remove it.

In addition, many times ornamental trimmings are discarded into cattle pastures and are frequently consumed by the animals which result in death.

Many trees have toxic potential. The black locust and oak trees are common in pastures. Contact is unavoidable in many situations. There are others, such as Buckeye, which are used as ornamentals. Everyone knows about the toxic potential of the wild cherry when this plant wilts, cyanide is formed and a quick death results from its ingestion.

Other common hay and grazing plants that can cause toxic effects when stressed are Johnsongrass, sorghum, Sudan, and sudex. All of these plants can form cyanide when stressed by frost, excessively trampled during grazing, from disease, or from heavy nitrogen fertilization.