

Atropa belladonna

Common name:

Deadly Nightshade, Dwale,

Palatability to Livestock:

Not known to be eaten.

Toxicity to Goats:

High risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Toxic to all livestock spp as well as humans, but appears to be rarely eaten.

Poisonous Principle:

Tropane alkaloids, notably atropine, scopolamine and hyoscyamine.

Effects:

Signs and Symptoms:

- . Constipation and infrequent urination; some initial excitation and later depression, muscle trembling and weakness, leading to recumbency.
- . Dilated pupils, dry mouth and nose, increased heart rate but a weak pulse.
- . Loss of rumen sounds, laboured respiration.
- . In humans, nausea, fainting, loss of coordination, respiration and heart difficulties, drop in temperature and blindness.

Health and Production Problems:

- . Some cases may progress further to either coma or terminal convulsions, within 24 hours.
- . May block the effects of acetylcholine on smooth muscle tissue.
- . Many cases recover.

Treatment:

- . See Vet. Try activated charcoal.

Integrated Control Strategy:

.Garden plant.

- . Use herbicide as a spot spray, or hand pull into disposable bags.
- . Do not feed to any livestock.

Comments:

- . *A. belladonna* is cultivated in Australia for medicinal drug manufacture.
- . Animal flesh may pass on the toxin.
- . An erect, short-lived, perennial, branched herb, with a short invasive rootstock, which bleeds red sap.
- . Grows over a metre high.
- . Stems are slightly downy and branched at intervals, gives off a foul odour when crushed.
- . Alternate leaves are large, dark green, oval and entire on stalks, growing in pairs, one leaf much larger than the other.
- . Flowers are grey/yellow outside, and reddish/purple inside, with red veins, bell shaped, with a broad tubular corolla, and five lips.
- . Single flowers grow on stalks all summer.
- . Berries are purple to black and shiny, as large as a cherry, sweet to taste, and narcotic.
- . Usually found in the cooler parts of Australia, where it was used as a novelty garden plant.
- . It is a native of Europe, and common on the chalk downs in England.



Picture: *Atropa belladonna* Wikipedia

Further Reading:

- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981.
- . Simmonds, Holst and Bourle. Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Australian Weeds to Goats. 2000
- . Wilson. Some Plants are Poisonous. 1997