

## *Carduus nutans*

### **Common name:**

Nodding thistle, Musk thistle,

### **Palatability to Livestock:**

Moderate.

### **Toxicity to Goats:**

Low risk.

### **Toxicity to Other Species:**

Potentially toxic to sheep and cattle.

### **Poisonous Principle:**

Nitrates.

### **Effects:**

#### *Signs and Symptoms;*

. Nitrate poisoning causes respiratory distress and darkening of the gums.

#### *Health and Production Problems;*

. Affected animals may be just found dead, or die very quickly. Some may recover.  
. A vegetable fault in fleece.

#### *Treatment;*

Be aware of potential stock problems.

### **Integrated Control Strategy:**

. Goats eat the flower buds and young growth, and prevent seeding.  
. Use "Group I" herbicides at the rosette stage, and again later. Do not slash as the weed will flower at low growth levels. Grub out.  
. Biological control agents are being tested.  
. This is a "Declared Weed" in parts of NSW, Victoria, and Western Australia.

### **Comments:**

. Nitrate accumulating plants are frequently grazed without any adverse effects, providing stock are allowed to adapt to them slowly.  
. An erect annual or biennial forb, growing to about a metre tall.

. The upper half has many branches, if the crown is damaged, multiple stems are produced.

. The rosette has whitish mid-veins, the leaves are deeply lobed and end in a spine.

. The flowers are single and form at the end of the branch, and droop. They can be white, pink, red or purple.

. Establishes well on bare ground, and competes with pasture.

. May have allelopathic properties, which inhibit pasture species.



Picture: *Carduus nutans* Noxious Weed Control.

### **Further Reading:**

. Cherry. Fact Sheet, Central Northern CC. 1997.  
. Lamp and Collett.  
Field Guide to Weeds in Australia. 1979.  
. Landcare Note. DPI. Victoria.  
. Parsons and Cuthbertson.  
Noxious Weeds of Australia. 2001.  
. Simmonds, Holst and Bourke. Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Australian Weeds to Goats. 2000