

Castanospermum australe

Common name:

Black bean, Morton Bay chestnut,

Palatability to Livestock:

Not known to be eaten.

Toxicity to Goats:

High risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:

High risk to sheep, cattle and horses.

Poisonous Principle:

Castanospermine, an indolizidine alkaloid.

Effects:

Signs and Symptoms;

. Gastro-enteritis, causing severe diarrhoea, associated weight loss and depression.

Health and Production Problems;

. Affected animals either die or become ill-thrifty.

Treatment;

Be aware of potential stock problems.

Integrated Control Strategy:

. Usually a Parks and Gardens specimen tree.
. Dispose of clippings carefully, or burn.

Comments:

. Grown in coastal Queensland and northern NSW. Found naturally in rainforests and along river banks. Also grown as street or garden trees.

. A large native rainforest tree, with a huge trunk. evergreen, needs deep rich soils. A native of NE Australia.

. Leaves are alternate, a dark glossy green on the upper surface; there are ten or more leaflets along a stalk, with a swollen base, and smell of cucumber if crushed.

- . Flowers are reddish/yellow and pea- shaped, growing on the old wood, and flowering in the spring; five petals, long stamens, in summer.
- . The seed pods are dark brown and very hard. When ripe they split showing several very large seeds.
- . Poisoning occurs in dry seasons when fodder is scarce. Some cattle seem to prefer the seeds, and ripe seeds seem to be more toxic than unripe seeds.
- . Leaves, seeds and bark can be toxic to humans and livestock.
- . Ripe seeds that have germinated do not seem to cause toxicity problems. Seeds must be cooked before eating to destroy the toxins.
- . After more research, this plant may be useful for treating cancer.
- . The timber is hard, dark brown and ideal for cabinet-making, a valuable product, however the sawdust can cause nasal bleeding and dermatitis.
- . Poisoning usually occurs during drought, in winter, when seeds are on the ground.



Picture: *Castanospermum australe*

Further Reading:

- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981
- . Dowling and McKenzie, Poisonous Plants . 1993
- . Wilson. Some Plants are Poisonous. 1997
- . Shepherd. Pretty but Poisonous, 2004.
- . Mckenzie. Veterinary Clinical Toxicology. 2000