

Chenopodium spp

Common name:

Fat hen, Goosefoot, Nitre bush,
Crumb weed, Lambs quarters,

Palatability to Livestock:

High at all stages.

Toxicity to Goats:

Low risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Potentially toxic to sheep and cattle, and pigs.

Poisonous Principle:

Nitrates and Oxalates.

Effects:

Signs and Symptoms;

- . Nitrate poisoning causes respiratory distress, darkening of the gums and rapid death.
- . Acute oxalate poisoning causes muscle tremors, staggering gait, collapse and rapid death.

Health and Production Problems;

- . Chronic kidney disease with associated ill-thrift is possible when large amounts of oxalate producing plants are eaten over long periods.
- . These plants may cause a taint in milk if eaten by dairy cows.

Treatment;

- . Be aware of potential stock problems.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Goats will eat the plants down to the ground.
- . Hand pull, wick wipe or spot spray with "Group C or I" type herbicides, before flowering.

Comments:

- . Erect annual or perennial forbs, or shrubs, growing to about a metre high. May have a strong smell when crushed.

- . The stems are angular, and the leaves are entire and lance shaped, and have a mealy-grey appearance. Leaf edges are slightly toothed or lobed.
- . Some varieties have spines.
- . Some spp may have a red stem, eg. *C. nitrariaceum*, Nitre goosefoot.
- . Flowers are variable, in dense nubbly green clumps usually in the axils of the upper leaves, and tips of branches, in late summer to autumn.
- . Seeds are black and shiny.
- . These plants may occasionally cause problems in hungry stock that are unaccustomed to them, but are generally eaten without any ill effects.
- . They are valuable as fodder plants, and have high protein levels.
- . A weed of cultivated land.
- . Native of Europe.
- . The seeds may have been eaten by the Iron Age Man (Hatfield, 1969)



Picture: *Chenopodium spp* H. Simmonds. Calga NSW.

Further Reading:

- . Auld and Medd. Weeds. 1992
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981
- . Lamp and Collett. Field Guide to Weeds in Australia. 1976
- . Simmonds, Holst and Bourke. Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Aust Weeds to Goats. 2000
- . Swarbrick and Skarratt. Bushweed 2 Database. 1997