

Dieffenbachia spp

Common name:

Dumbcane,

Palatability to Livestock:

Garden plant.

Not known to be eaten.

Toxicity to Goats:

High risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Toxic to all livestock, and humans.

Poisonous Principle:

. Calcium oxalate crystals.

. Unknown protein toxin.

Effects:

Signs and symptoms;

- . If leaves or stems are chewed, it causes copious salivation, and an intense burning and irritation of the mouth, lips and tongue.
- . This is followed by a watery swelling, causing difficulty in breathing and talking.
- . Skin and eye irritant.

Health and Production Problems;

- . Some signs and symptoms will persist for many days before recovery begins.

Treatment;

- . Rinse mouth with water. See Vet.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Prune or weed into disposable bags.
- . Do not feed to any livestock.

Comments:

. Garden plant.

. A genus of over 2000 evergreen annuals or perennials commonly grown as indoor, or outdoor plants, in pots, for their foliage.

- . Leaves are large, soft and light green, often spotted, or patterned with white or cream, to 60 cms long.
- . The plants grow up to two metres high, and are erect, with stout stems, but may need staking.
- . Only the stems of these plants are toxic.
- . Flowers are usually a spathe, a large bract enclosing a flower head or spadex, either green or white.
- . All have attractive shiny leaves.
- . Berries are brightly coloured.
- . Some plants have needle-like crystals of calcium oxalate, which can puncture the skin causing much pain.
- . Similar plants are *monstera* and *calandrina*.
- . Legend has it, that this plant was used to prevent humans from talking by causing the tongue to swell.



Picture: *Dieffenbachia spp*

Further Reading:

- . Covacevich, Davie and Pearn. Toxic Plants and Animals, A guide for Australia. 1987.
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981.
- . McBarron. Medical and Veterinary Aspects of Plant Poisons. 1976.
- . Simmonds, Holst and Bourke. Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Australian Weeds to Goats. 2000.
- . Shepherd. Pretty but Poisonous. 2004.