

Lolium spp

Common name:

Ryegrass, Perennial ryegrass,

Palatability to Livestock:

High at all stages.

Toxicity to Goats:

Low risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Potentially toxic to sheep, cattle and horses.

Poisonous Principle:

- . Lolitremes, and sporidesmin,
- . Corynetoxins and ergot toxins,
- . Nitrates.

Effects:

Signs and symptoms;

- . "Ryegrass staggers".
- . Lolitremes can cause severe incoordination, together with severe body tremors.
- . Sporidesmin can cause liver damage that results in photosensitization of unpigmented or unprotected skin areas, particularly the face and head.
- . Ergot toxins can cause hyperthermia, together with growth, lactation and reproduction problems.

Health and Production Problems;

- . Cessation of lolitremes in the diet is followed by recovery within days.
- . Full recovery from sporidesmin may take months, otherwise chronic ill thrift is possible, or death.
- . Keep stock off rye grass when rapid regrowth occurs after rain.
- . Stock may drown if too much effort is required to access water.

Treatment:

- . Keep stock quiet, and remove them from affected pasture, until ryegrass matures.
- . Both forms of poisoning can be lethal.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Be aware of potential stock problems.

Comments:

- . Tall, hairless, perennial, or annual, tufted grass, up to 90 cms high, with erect or spreading stems, growing in winter and spring.
- . Leaf blades are long, with two ear-like extensions where they join the stem, soft bright green and narrow.
- . Flowerhead is a spike.
- . Toxins have been derived from a parasitic fungus.
- . Ryegrass staggers shows itself in animals grazing short dried-up grass, with little leaf, after mowing for hay, short regrowth, or stemmy.
- . Poisoning is more common from January to May, young animals are most affected.
- . This plant is only affected by these problems in particular geographic areas, and then only in some years.
- . Pollen can cause allergies in humans.
- . Flowering is from spring to summer.



Picture: *Lolium spp* Ciba Geigy

Further Reading:

- . Auld and Medd. Weeds 1979.
- . Dowling and McKenzie. Poisonous Plants.1993
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981
- . McBarron. Poisonous Plants, Handbook. 1983.