

Phalaris spp

Common name:

Phalaris grasses

Palatability to Livestock:

High at all stages.

Toxicity to Goats:

Low risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Potentially toxic to sheep and cattle.

Poisonous Principle:

- . Indole alkaloids,
- . Unknown substances.

Effects:

Signs and symptoms;

- . Incoordination,
- . Limb weakness and head and body tremors.

Health and Production Problems;

- . Recovery in some cases,
- . Animals may be affected for days, or months.
- . Keep sheep off phalaris in early mornings, and in overcast weather.
- . Use cobalt bullets.

Treatment;

Remove from pasture.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Hand pull.
- . Wick wipe before flowering.

Comments:

- . A deep rooted, erect, tufted, perennial grass, growing in clumps.
- . Sap is pinkish if damaged.
- . Stems are very leafy and swollen at the base.
- . Leaves are hairless, bluish green, long and tapering.
- . The seed head is a compact, cylindrical spike.

- . A valuable pasture grass, native to the Mediterranean, widely cultivated as a perennial pasture, NSW, Vic, SA.
- . Makes the best growth in autumn and winter.
- . The amount of alkaloid is greater in the early hours of the morning in new growth, on soils high in nitrogen. Low light, foggy or cloudy weather, high temps and frost can increase the concentration of alkaloids.
- . Frost and/or high levels of soil nitrogen will increase the high levels of alkaloids.
- . The condition is called “phalaris staggers”.
- . Best to heavily stock to eat it down before problems arise.
- . Country low or deficient in cobalt seems to have more cases of toxicity.
- . Most animals recover quickly if removed from toxic pasture. Do not drive animals hard.



Picture: Ciba Geigy

Phalaris canariensis (canary grass)

Further Reading:

- . Auld and Medd. Weeds. 1979.
- . Everist. . Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981
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- . Swarbrick and Skarratt. Bushweed 2 Database. 1994
- . Simmonds, Holst and Bourke. Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Australian Weeds to Goats. 2000