

Sorghum halepense

Common name:

Johnson grass, Aleppo grass,
Evergreen millet

Palatability to Livestock:

High at all stages.

Toxicity to Goats:

Moderate risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Toxic to sheep, cattle and horses.

Poisonous Principle:

- . Cyanogenetic glycosides,
- . Nitrates,
- . Unknown neurotoxin.

Effects:

Signs and symptoms;

Cyanide poisoning causes animals to –

- . Stagger and fall, shiver,
- . Fast deep breathing,
- . Weak rapid pulse.

Nitrate poisoning causes –

- . Loss of appetite,
- . Difficult breathing, frothing at the mouth,
- . Rapid weak pulse,
- . Shivers, leg weakness, incoordination.

Sorghum nervous ataxia causes –

- . Limb weakness,
- . Incoordination, trembling.
- . Occasionally animals may appear blind, or deaf, and be unable to use their tongues and jaws in a normal manner.

Health and Production Problems;

- . These toxins may cause sudden death.
- . Pregnant animals may drop affected offspring, with twisted limbs, or big heads.

Treatment;

- . Try a molasses drench.
- . See Vet.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . For goats, excellent fodder provided there is also a mixed pasture to balance the diet.
- . Spread by creeping rootstock.
- . Slash and burn in summer.
- . Spray regrowth before flowering to prevent seeding, use Herbicide, Group D.
- . Declared “Noxious” in all NSW.

Comments:

- . Native of North America.
- . Pernicious weed because of tough horizontal rhizomes, and it invades cultivation, sending up shoots through the soil.
- . Naturalized in all states.
- . A perennial giant grass, often streaked with reddish brown.
- . In summer, flower panicles appear at the top of the plant, often collapsing the head.
- . Seed heads tend to slope away from the central stem.



Picture: *Sorghum halepense*
NE CC poster.

Ciba Geigy

Further Reading:

- . AGDEX 647.
- . Cherry. Fact Sheet. Central Northern CC. 1998.
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia.1981.
- . Dowling and McKenzie. Poisonous Plants.1994
- . Parsons and Cuthbertson.
Noxious Weeds of Australia. 2001.
- . Roth. Weeds. Friend or Foe. 2001