

## *Xanthorrhoea spp*

### **Common name:**

Grass trees. Blackboys,

### **Palatability to Livestock:**

Not normally eaten.

### **Toxicity to Goats:**

Low.

### **Toxicity to Other Species:**

Toxic to cattle.

### **Poisonous Principle:**

Unknown.

### **Effects:**

#### *Signs and Symptoms:*

- . Constant sideways lurching of hindquarters, (reversible condition).
- . Incoordination,
- . Fall easily, have difficulty rising.
- . Urinary incontinence.
- . Weight loss.

#### *Health and Production Problems:*

- . Condition appears to be reversible.
- . Fall in production of livestock.

#### *Treatment:*

- . Deny access to flowering plants.
- . Recovery in 2-3 weeks in most cases.

### **Integrated Control Strategy:**

- . Not practical.

### **Comments:**

- . Flower spikes are the most toxic parts, but leaves have caused problems.
- . Delayed onset after access may be up to 10 weeks.
- . Syndrome is known as “Wamps” (sound of cattle hitting the ground), in the NT.
- . A slow growing native plant of Australia.
- . An evergreen perennial, developing a stout trunk.

- . Narrow, green, arching, spiky leaves up to a metre long, spread from the top.
- . Small, fragrant, white flowers are carried in candle-like spikes, several metres high, on woody stems.
- . Flowering is erratic.
- . Grasstree poisoning seems to occur during autumn and early winter, in poor country deficient in minerals, and when protein levels in the fodder are low.
- . The leaves are not toxic and the young flower spikes seem more toxic than the old ones.
- . Grass trees were used by the aborigines as a source of starch, nectar, grubs, gum for glue, and flower stalks for spears. The lower centre of the plant was also eaten.



Picture: *Xanthorrhoea spp*



Pictures: Helen Simmonds. Calga NSW

### **Reference:**

- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981.
- . McKenzie. Veterinary Clinical Toxicology. 2000.