

Sorghum X almum

Common name:

Columbus grass,

Palatability to Livestock:

High, young shoots.

Toxicity to Goats:

Moderate.

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 mixed pasture to balance the diet.
- . Spread by the creeping rootstock and seed.
- . Slash and burn in summer.
- . Spray regrowth before flowering to prevent seeding, use Herbicide, Group D.
- . Declared “Noxious” in all NSW.

Comments:

- . Summer growing perennial, more vigorous than Johnson grass, with good drought resistance.
- . Rhizomes usually present, shorter and stouter, usually curved downwards, then up at the tips.
- . Seed heads are large, and usually black and shiny .
- . Natural hybrid between Johnson grass and a cultivar of *S. vulgare*.
- . Introduced into Australia from Argentina as a fodder grass in mid-1900’s.
- . Now a forage crop in northern NSW and southern and central Qld.



Picture: *Sorghum X almum* iinet.net.au

Further Reading:

- . AGDEX.
- . Cherry. Fact Sheet. Central Northern CC. 1998.
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981
- . Dowling and McKenzie. Poisonous Plants. 1994.
- . McBarron. Poisonous Plants, Handbook. 1983
- . Parsons and Cuthbertson. Noxious Weeds of Australia. 2001.