**Asclepias curassavica**

**Common name:**
Redhead cotton bush, Milkweed,

**Palatability to Livestock:**
Not usually eaten.

**Toxicity to Goats:**
Toxic, moderate risk.

**Toxicity to Other Species:**
Cattle, sheep, horses, donkeys, pigs.

**Poisonous Principle:**
Cardiac glycosides, (cardenolide, gofruside).

**Effects:**
*Signs and symptoms;*
. Loss of appetite, depression,
. Diarrhoea, maybe blood stained,
. Bloating, swelling under jaw,
. Slow irregular heart-beat, feeble pulse,
. Breathing difficulties, bluish gums,
. PM shows internal haemorrhages.

*Health and Production Problems;*
. Severely affected animals may collapse and die with breathing problems, and bluish gums.
. Illness may last for several days, showing depression, diarrhoea, irregular heart–beat, and the animal may recover if treated.

*Treatment;*
. See Vet as soon as possible.
. Try activated charcoal drench.
. Electrolyte replacement.

**Integrated Control Strategy:**
. Plants are not usually palatable, but can be eaten if other feed is scarce, or accidentally eaten with other feed.
. Hand pull into disposable bags, especially the seeds pods. (Best way).
. Spot spray with herbicide, try glyphosate, however, it is difficult to kill in this way.

**Comments:**
. An erect perennial shrub, growing to over a metre high, stems are green at the base, and reddish at the top.
. Stems and leaves exude a milky sap, when damaged.
. Leaves are opposite, dark green to reddish green, long and narrow, (6 – 15cm), tapering to a point at both ends, and located towards the end of the stems.
. Small bunches of flowers grow at the ends of branches. They are red, with an orange centre, the petals are curved backwards.
. The fruit is a long narrow pod, which splits open to set loose flat seeds with silky hairs at one end.
. Flowering and fruiting is from late winter to autumn, germination is in spring.
. An introduced weed from tropical America, now found in coastal Queensland, NSW, and Western Australia. Often found in shady areas, with high rainfall, on roadsides, etc.
. Ruminants are more tolerant of this plant than horses, most cases of poisoning occur in dairy cattle, when feed is scarce.

**Picture:** *Asclepias curassavica*  
gvcocks.homeip.netPlantFamilies

**Further Reading;**
. Wilson. Some Plants are Poisonous. 1997

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