

Cenchrus echinatus

Common name:

Mossman River grass, Buffel grass
Spiny burr grass,

Palatability to Livestock:

Moderate.

Toxicity to Goats:

Low risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Toxic to sheep, cattle, horses and donkeys.

Poisonous Principle:

Oxalates.

Effects:

Signs and Symptoms;

Acute oxalate poisoning causes muscle tremors, staggering gait, collapse and death.

Health and Production Problems;

- . Chronic kidney disease with associated ill-thrift is possible when large amounts of these plants are eaten over a long period.
- . A fleece contaminant.

Treatment;

Be aware of potential stock problems.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Avoid spread of seed on tyres, animal coats, etc.
- . Prevent seeding by heavy grazing or cultivating.
- . Wick wipe or spot spray with herbicide, Group A. (fops)
- . Some species are declared “Noxious Weeds” in most states of Australia.

Comments:

- . Weeds from this genus are often grazed without causing any adverse effects.

- . Oxalate accumulating plants can sometimes cause a calcium deficiency state in horses and donkeys, called “Big Head”, nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism.
- . A species of short lived, erect, annual grasses, with stems bent at the lower nodes forming loose tufts, with either a sprawling or tussocky habit.
- . The inflorescence is a spike of closely packed “burrs”, often pale green, or purplish in colour.
- . Germination of seed is staggered over months or years.
- . An important weed of pastures, crops and fleece.
- . Causes problems to humans, stock and dogs, with painful injuries being caused by the burrs.



Pictures: *Cenchrus echinatus*

Picture: Ciba-Geigy.

Picture: Helen Simmonds. Calga, NSW.

Further Reading:

- . Auld and Medd. Weeds. 1992
- . Ciba-Geigy. Grass weeds 1.
- . Parsons and Cuthbertson. Noxious Weeds of Australia. 2001
- . Simmonds, Holst and Bourke. Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Australian Weeds to Goats. 2000
- . Swarbrick and Skarratt. Bushweed 2 Database 1997