**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:**
. Swarbrick and Skarratt. Bushweed 2 Database 1997

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