**Cheilanthes spp**

**Common name:**
Rock fern, Mulga fern,

**Palatability to Livestock:**
Seldom eaten.

**Toxicity to Goats:**
Moderate risk.

**Toxicity to Other Species:**
Toxic to sheep, cattle, horses and pigs.

**Poisonous Principle:**
Thiaminases, as well as norsesquiterpene glucocides, notably ptaquiloside.

**Effects:**
*Signs and symptoms:*
Two different outcomes are possible –
- Either depression, confusion, disinterest in surroundings, apparent blindness, head pressing and eventually recumbency with episodic convulsions.
- Alternately, animals may develop an anaemic condition that shows up best when they are forced to exercise, and results in their sudden collapse with laboured breathing.
- They may also display blood in nasal discharges, faeces or urine, together with small haemorrhages of the skin around the mouth, nose, rectum and vagina.

*Health and Production Problems:*
- The first condition results in death within days.
- Second condition results in chronic anaemia and ill-thrift, due to bone marrow destruction, and apparent sudden death if forced to exercise.

*Treatment:*
- None. Be aware of potential stock problems.

**Integrated Control Strategy:**
- Metsulfuron®, and wetting agent.
- Improve the soil, and fertilise.

**Comments:**
- Tufted, short, creeping, dainty, perennial ferns with rhizomes, and erect dark green leaves on thin dark brown stalks.
- Under dry conditions the fronds curl up and appear dead, but they usually expand after rain.
- The rough underground stem just below the surface can grow all year, especially after rain.
- These plants are generally avoided, but there is a tendency for them to be eaten in drought periods when there is little else available.
- Casual ingestion is safe, but too much is dangerous.
- Most poisonings are in April – September.
- Experimental evidence suggests that fern-infested paddocks can be grazed safely if animals are moved after about ten days, and rested in fern-free areas for about three weeks.
- Found throughout Australia.
- They may occur in exposed sites in pastures, woodlands and rocky areas, and form dense mats.

*Further Reading:*
- Auld and Medd. Weeds. 1992
- Dowling and McKenzie. Poisonous Plants. 1993
- Henry, Hall, Jordan, Milson, Schefe and Silcock. Pasture Plants of Southern Inland Queensland. 1995
- Simmonds, Holst and Bourke, Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Australian Weeds to Goats. 2000

Information included in this Info Sheet was obtained from the source documents, and no responsibility will be accepted by the compiler.