Chenopodium spp

Common name:
Fat hen, Goosefoot, Nitre bush, Crumb weed, Lambs quarters,

Palatability to Livestock:
High at all stages.

Toxicity to Goats:
Low risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:
Potentially toxic to sheep and cattle, and pigs.

Poisonous Principle:
Nitrates and Oxalates.

Effects:
Signs and Symptoms;
. Nitrate poisoning causes respiratory distress, darkening of the gums and rapid death.
. Acute oxalate poisoning causes muscle tremors, staggering gait, collapse and rapid death.

Health and Production Problems;
. Chronic kidney disease with associated ill-thrift is possible when large amounts of oxalate producing plants are eaten over long periods.
. These plants may cause a taint in milk if eaten by dairy cows.

Treatment;
. Be aware of potential stock problems.

Integrated Control Strategy:
. Goats will eat the plants down to the ground.
. Hand pull, wick wipe or spot spray with “Group C or I” type herbicides, before flowering.

Comments:
. Erect annual or perennial forbs, or shrubs, growing to about a metre high. May have a strong smell when crushed.
. The stems are angular, and the leaves are entire and lance shaped, and have a mealy-grey appearance. Leaf edges are slightly toothed or lobed.
. Some varieties have spines.
. Some spp may have a red stem, eg. C. nitrariaceum, Nitre goosefoot.
. Flowers are variable, in dense nubbly green clumps usually in the axils of the upper leaves, and tips of branches, in late summer to autumn.
. Seeds are black and shiny.
. These plants may occasionally cause problems in hungry stock that are unaccustomed to them, but are generally eaten without any ill effects.
. They are valuable as fodder plants, and have high protein levels.
. A weed of cultivated land.
. Native of Europe.
. The seeds may have been eaten by the Iron Age Man (Hatfield, 1969)

Further Reading:

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