**Echium vulgare**

**Common name:**
Blue thistle, Vipers bugloss,

**Palatability to Livestock:**
High at flowering.

**Toxicity to Goats:**
Moderate risk.

**Toxicity to Other Species:**
Horses, pigs, cattle, and in excess to sheep.

**Poisonous Principle:**
Pyrrolizidine alkaloids.
Echiumine and echiumidine alkaloids.

**Effects:**
*Signs and symptoms;*
. Loss of condition and depression.
. Colic and staggers.
. Lung and liver damage after prolonged exposure.

*Health and Production Problems;*
. Liver damage,
. Accumulated copper can kill the animal,
. Convalescence is protracted.

**Treatment;**
None.

**Integrated Control Strategy:**
. Use goats to reduce flowering.
. Spray graze, and pasture improvement.
. Biological control agents are being tested.
. Declared “Noxious” in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania.

**Comments:**
. Annual or perennial plant, up to 90cms high, covered with bristles.
. Stems often spotted with red blotches.

. Basal leaves are narrow and pointed, in a rosette, stalkless and spear shaped, leaf veins are longitudinal, not branched as in Patersons Curse.
. Flowers are on a spike, in rows, appearing several weeks later than Patersons curse. Smaller and more blue in colour.
. This plant is used in many herbal medicines as a diuretic, treatment for fevers, nervous disorders, and for snake and other poisonous bites.

**Further Reading:**
. Cribb and Cribb. Wild Medicine in Australia 1990
. Cunningham, Mulham, Milthorpe and Leigh. Plants of Western NSW. 1999
. Wilson. Some Plants are Poisonous. 1997

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