

Indigofera linnaei

Common name:

Birdsville indigo

Palatability to Livestock:

Moderate.

Toxicity to Goats:

Not affected.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Horses, and subsequently dogs.

Poisonous Principle:

Possibly a nitrotoxin.

Effects:

Signs and symptoms;

- . Lethargy,
- . Progressive incoordination,
- . Loss of appetite.

Health and Production Problems;

- . Horses become ill and may die.
- . Dogs become ill after eating affected meat from poisoned, dead horses, and may die.

Treatment;

- . Gelatine drench, see Vet.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Use sheep or goats to eat out the plant, before putting horses onto the pasture.
- . Supplementary feed to horses.

Comments:

- . A prostrate, sometimes a flat, mat-forming annual or perennial legume, with many thin, hairy stems, growing up to forty cms in length.
- . Alternate pinnate leaves made of five to nine grey-green, hairy, oval shaped leaflets in two rows.
- . The flowers are small, pea-like, pinkish red and crowded onto short stalks.

- . Groups of cylindrical pods up to five cms long and pointed at the tip, containing two seeds.
- . One of the first plants to shoot after rain, and may be prevalent around waterholes and other trampled areas.
- . Eaten readily and without apparent ill effect by sheep and cattle, this plant is responsible for Birdsville disease in horses.
- . This disease can occur following rains which are sufficient for the growth of this plant, but not enough to encourage grass growth.
- . Horses loose condition and become dull, lethargic and uncoordinated.
- . The rear hooves become worn with constant dragging, and when driven, affected horses may exhibit tight uncoordinated circling spasms, suddenly loose control, collapse and die.
- . There is no treatment at the moment.
- . Paddocks should be grazed by cattle or sheep before horses are introduced.
- . Poisoning mainly in western Queensland, northern SA and NT; winter to early summer.
- . Mild cases seem to recover unaided.



Picture: *Indigofera linnaei*

Further Reading:

- . Dowling and McKenzie. Poisonous Plants. 1993
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981.
- . Henry, Hall, Jordan, Milson, Sclafe and Silcock. Pasture Plants of Southern Queensland. 1995.
- . McKenzie. Veterinary Clinical Toxicology. 2000