Sarcostemma australe

Common name:
Caustic vine, Caustic bush, Pencil caustic, Milk vine,

Palatability to Livestock:
Moderate.

Toxicity to Goats:
Low risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:
Toxic to sheep, cattle, horses.

Poisonous Principle:
Saponins, steroidal glycocides.

Effects:
Signs and symptoms;
. Restlessness,
. Staggering and collapse,
. Rapid breathing, paddling legs,
. Jaws may be clamped shut, salivate heavily,
. Seizures, convulsions, limb paddling.

Health and Production Problems;
. Animals with mild symptoms usually recover.
. Those with severe problems, die.

Treatment;
. Keep stock out of paddocks with this plant in drought times.
. Can be controlled by mechanical removal, however sap can cause severe irritation and burning of skin and eyes.

Integrated Control Strategy:
. Physically remove the plant.
. Take care with caustic sap.

Comments:
. A leafless scrambler or bush, with smooth, jointed, succulent stems, covered with a bloom, forming an untidy shrub.
. Variable in habit from an erect shrub on exposed beaches, to a climbing tangled vine in less exposed sites.
. There are no obvious leaves, and they consist only of smooth, jointed, pencil-sized succulent stems, containing a milky sap.
. Stems may climb up trees, or form a bush.
. Sap is milky and corrosive to the skin.
. Flowers are pale green to cream-white, star shaped and waxy, in clusters at the stem joints; usually spring and autumn flowering.
. Pods split to release flat tufted seeds.
. Found in all mainland states, except Victoria.
. Most common in tropical and sub tropical areas.
. Rarely grazed except in very dry seasons when fodder is scarce.
. Fresh shoots may be more toxic than the old shoots.
. NB can be confused with Euphorbia sarcostemmaoides which has a similar appearance.
. Native to northern Australia.

Picture: griffith.edu.au

Further Reading:
. McKenzie R. Veterinary Clinical Toxicology. 2000
. Australian Native Plants. Wrigley and Fagg. 1988

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