**Senecio madagascariensis**

**Common name:**
Fireweed, Variable groundsel,

**Palatability:**
High at flowering.

**Toxicity to Goats:**
Low risk.

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

**Poisonous Principle:**
Pyrrolizidine alkaloids.

**Effects:**
*Signs and symptoms;*
. Chronic weight loss,
. Acute jaundice, lethargy, poor muscle coordination and twiching.
. Maybe photosensitization.

*Health and Production Problems;*
. Eating an excess of this plant may lead to chronic liver damage.
. Reduced long term productivity.
. Damaged livers in some ruminants may accumulate excess copper, which can kill the animal.

*Treatment;*
. None.

**Integrated Control Strategy:**
. Goats preferentially eat fireweed, especially the flowers.
. Slash to prevent flowering.
. Use herbicides, (Group C), glyphosates or Brominil®.

**Comments:**
. An annual or short-lived perennial, with a shallow, branched taproot, variable growth habit and leaf structure, bright-green, standing out in dry pasture.
. Leaves are elongated, dark green, and variable in shape, with entire, serrated or lobed margins, 2 – 6 cms long or more.
. Produces clusters of yellow, daisy flowers, 3-5 cms across, with 13 petals, from April to September.
. Seeds are narrow, cylindrical, small and light, with tufts of white silky bristles at one end. The plant has an enormous seeding capacity.
. Grows in cool seasons and flowers in spring, and can become prolific after a run of dry summers and wet winters, or after overgrazing.
. Most cases of poisoning have occurred in cattle, (and horses), sheep seem to be more resistant, and goats even more so.
. Under normal conditions, fireweed does not seem to be very palatable to livestock, but goats will seek it out. Specific bacteria in the goat’s rumen enable them to cope with a higher intake of fireweed, if alternate fodder is available.

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