Swainsona spp

Common name:
Darling pea, Swainsonia, Broughton pea,

Palatability to Livestock:
Occasionally eaten.

Toxicity to Goats:
High risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:
Toxic to horses and ruminants.

Poisonous Principle:
Indolizidine alkaloids, swainsonine.

Effects:
Signs and symptoms;
. Occasional hind leg weakness,
. Incoordination, staggering,
. Mild head tremor, weight loss,
. Nervous symptoms, erratic behavior.
. "Pea-struck" or "Loco disease", with varying degrees of addiction.

Health and Production Problems;
. Loss of condition, ill thrifty.
. May fail to get pregnant, or give birth to non-viable off-spring.
. May suffer permanent brain damage.

Treatment;
. Be aware of potential stock problems.
. None.

Integrated Control Strategy:
. Non-pregnant animals may be grazed on this weed for a few weeks at a time, and then rested.
. Safe grazing margin, may be less than 2 weeks for horses, less than 4 weeks for ruminants.
. Main growth period is autumn to winter.
. Rotate paddocks, use herbicides.

Comments:
. Trailing to semi-erect herbs or sub shrubs, perennial legumes.
. Leaves are compound, with an odd number of leaflets.
. Flowers are pea shaped, mauve, blue, purple, or red, very occasionally yellow or white.
. Pods have thin walls and a tapered tip.
. Occurs in all states, but mostly inland, and south of the tropics.
. The syndrome is called "peastruck".
. Most cases are in sheep, cattle, and horses, different animals exhibit different symptoms.
. Head carriage is high in sheep, low in cattle - show lack of judgment in stepping over things.
. Symptoms are aggravated by driving, leading to collapse, and death by accident.
. Grows autumn to spring, flowering in spring.
. All stock are susceptible, and all parts of the plant are poisonous, at all growth stages.
. Native to Australia, with many species; some are good as stock fodder, some are toxic.
. Toxin inhibits normal cell activity in processing sugar and mannose, and is detrimental to the nervous system and brain.
. There is more toxin in leaves than the stems.

Picture: *Swainsona spp*

Further Reading:

. Dowling and McKenzie. Poisonous Plants. 1994.
. Everist. .Poisonous Plants of Australia.1981.
. Kohnke Feeding and Nutrition of Horses.1998.
. McBarron. Poisonous Plants, Handbook. 1983.
. McKenzie R. Veterinary Clinical Toxicology. 2000.
. Simmonds, Holst and Bourke. Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Australian Weeds to Goats. 2000.
. Henry, Hall Jordan, Milson, Schefe and Silcock. Pasture Plants of Southern Inland Qld. 1995
. Wilson..Some Plants are Poisonous. 1997.