

# Noxious Weeds to Livestock

# Oleander

- Common plant used in landscaping, highways, yards, driveways
- Always green, flowers 9-12 months per year, leaves 4-6 inches, can grow to 12-14 feet high
- Can be pruned back severely and grows back rapidly
- Extremely toxic: several leaves are enough to kill an adult cow or horse. The entire plant is toxic but usually just the leaves are consumed. Often leaves are mixed in with other yard clippings or trimmings and mistakenly fed to livestock. Can also be found in baled hay if plants are along a hay field.

# Oleander



- Signs/symptoms: Signs can begin to show within 6 hours of ingestion. Acute death. Toxins affect the heart, so early signs would include a weak pulse, colic, trembling, weakness, labored breathing, congested mucous membranes, increased heart rate, depression and tremors.
- No specific treatment for the toxin. Can try to provide supportive care. IV fluids, activated charcoal orally, rumenotomy to remove stomach contents, or gastric lavage.



# Yellow Star Thistle

- Yellow Star Thistle is an invasive plant that tends to invade disturbed soil. Often seen along highways, roads or previously farmed fields that have been exposed to the seeds.
- Affects horses. Also known as “Chewing disease”
- Progressive accumulation of the toxins. Horse will usually not eat the plant unless no other feed sources are available. Then almost appear addicted to eating it. Once enough of the plant has been consumed, 20-100 % of the body weight of the horse over 1-2 months time period, the toxin paralyzes the cranial nerves that control swallowing.



- Signs/symptoms: weight loss, difficulty in chewing, difficulty in swallowing, weakness, lethargy, circling, wandering aimlessly
- Ruminants are not affected since the toxin is metabolized in the rumen.
- There is no treatment or antidote.





# Lupines

- Native plant. Not all species are toxic. Younger plants tend to be more toxic, especially until they shed the seed pods. Consumption of the seed pods or in hay is the usual exposure.
- 1-10 # consumed or smaller amounts over time.
- Symptoms: nervousness, salivation, depression, lethargy, muscular weakness or tremors, difficulty in breathing, birth defects.
- Birth defects include cleft palate, crooked legs or crooked spine.
- No treatment. Best to keep off of the range during early growth of the plant or toxic seed stage, especially in the first trimester of pregnancy.



# Milkweeds

- Toxic to all livestock: resinoids, glycosides, alkaloids
- Eating >2% of body weight can cause symptoms
- Most toxic during the growth phase of the plant, can be exposed on the range or in baled hay.
- Usually acute death
- Symptoms: depression, weakness, staggering, difficulty breathing, dilated pupils, weak pulse, spasms
- Usually livestock will not consume milkweeds if there is sufficient forage available
- No treatment. Supportive care



# Fiddleneck

- Pyrrolizidine alkaloid
- Liver toxicity, primarily in cattle and horses
- Cumulative toxin. Consume low doses over time (months)
- Entire plant is toxic especially the flowers. Usually exposed in contaminated hay. Livestock will avoid in the field if plenty of other forage is available.
- Symptoms: weight loss, depression, jaundice, head pressing, photosensitivity, incoordination.
- Poor prognosis once diagnosed due to fibrosis of liver







# Curly Dock

- Nitrate toxicity
- Oxalates combine Calcium and magnesium to cause the weakness
- Chronic exposure can cause kidney failure
- Need to consume 10-20 # of green plant to cause disease
- Treatment: IV calcium gluconate, magnesium sulfate, glucose, electrolytes

