

Atriplex spp

Common name:

Saltbush

Palatability to Livestock:

Moderate at all stages.

Toxicity to Goats:

Low risk toxicity.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Potentially toxic to sheep and cattle.

Poisonous Principle:

Nitrates and oxalates.

Effects:

Signs and Symptoms;

- . Nitrate poisoning causes respiratory distress, darkening of the gums, and rapid death.
- . Oxalate poisoning causes muscle tremors, staggering gait, collapse and death.

Health and Production Problems;

- . Chronic kidney disease with associated ill-thrift is possible when large amounts of oxalate producing plants are eaten over long periods.
- . May accumulate up to 30% salt in the leaves.

Treatment;

Be aware of potential stock problems.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Use goats.
- . Be aware of potential stock problems.

Comments:

- . Many species occurring throughout Australia.
- . Densely branched sprawling shrubs, with long branches, which may take root. They may be annual or perennial, and produce by wind blown seed.
- . Leaves are alternate, and may be covered with fine hairs giving a mealy appearance.

- . Flowers may be on panicles or spikes, either male or female.
- . About 50 species are endemic to Australia. Generally growing in low rainfall areas in the southern half of the continent. They are able to grow in either saline or alkaline soils.
- . Some species are fire resistant, or even fire retardant, and thus make excellent fire breaks. The deep taproot utilizes any underground moisture.
- . The mature plant provides good fodder for grazing stock, but should be maintained at the level where the plant survives. It is drought resistant and frost tolerant. Some spp are used as erosion control .
- . Extremely tolerant of salt content in the soil, and they retain salt content in the leaves. Many species are edible.
- . Palatability varies between the different varieties of saltbush.



Picture: *Atriplex nummularia*

Further Reading;

- . Cunningham, Mulham, Milthorpe and Leigh, Plants of Western NSW. 1999.
- . Elliot and Jones Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants.1981.
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981
- . Harden. Flora of NSW. 2000
- . Swarbrick & Skarratt. Bushweed 2 Database. 1997