

Carduus nutans

Common name:

Nodding thistle, Musk thistle,

Palatability to Livestock:

Moderate.

Toxicity to Goats:

Low risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Potentially toxic to sheep and cattle.

Poisonous Principle:

Nitrates.

Effects:

Signs and Symptoms;

. Nitrate poisoning causes respiratory distress and darkening of the gums.

Health and Production Problems;

. Affected animals may be just found dead, or die very quickly. Some may recover.
. A vegetable fault in fleece.

Treatment;

Be aware of potential stock problems.

Integrated Control Strategy:

. Goats eat the flower buds and young growth, and prevent seeding.
. Use "Group I" herbicides at the rosette stage, and again later. Do not slash as the weed will flower at low growth levels. Grub out.
. Biological control agents are being tested.
. This is a "Declared Weed" in parts of NSW, Victoria, and Western Australia.

Comments:

. Nitrate accumulating plants are frequently grazed without any adverse effects, providing stock are allowed to adapt to them slowly.
. An erect annual or biennial forb, growing to about a metre tall.

. The upper half has many branches, if the crown is damaged, multiple stems are produced.

. The rosette has whitish mid-veins, the leaves are deeply lobed and end in a spine.

. The flowers are single and form at the end of the branch, and droop. They can be white, pink, red or purple.

. Establishes well on bare ground, and competes with pasture.

. May have allelopathic properties, which inhibit pasture species.



Picture: *Carduus nutans* Noxious Weed Control.

Further Reading:

. Cherry. Fact Sheet, Central Northern CC. 1997.
. Lamp and Collett. Field Guide to Weeds in Australia. 1979.
. Landcare Note. DPI. Victoria.
. Parsons and Cuthbertson. Noxious Weeds of Australia. 2001.
. Simmonds, Holst and Bourke. Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Australian Weeds to Goats. 2000