

Citrullus colocynthis

Common name:

Bitter apple, Wild water melon,

Palatability to Livestock:

Moderate.

Toxicity to Goats:

Low risk toxicity.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Potentially toxic to all grazing animals.

Poisonous Principle:

. Colocynthin, a-elaterin, a-phytosterol, and other substances.

Effects:

Signs and symptoms;

- . Severe diarrhoea.
- . Delerium,
- . Vision disturbances.

Health and Production Problems;

- . Dehydration and weight loss are possible.

Treatment;

- . Be aware of potential stock problems.
- . Try activated charcoal.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Grub out, collect and burn the ripe fruit.
- . Use herbicides.
- . This is a declared “Noxious Weed” in Victoria, South Australia and Northern Territory.

Comments:

- . Rarely eaten by livestock.
- . A prostrate, perennial vine, with a thick taproot, and sprawling, branched stems up to 6 metres long. Can produce tendrils at the nodes, and has a thick woody tap root.
- . Grey-green, alternate leaves, large, lobed, hairy, and rough.

. The flowers are yellow, with five petals, male and female on the same plant on short stalks, growing from the leaf axils.

. Flowers in summer.

. The fruit is dark green, dappled with yellow bands, spherical and about 10cms in diameter. Pulp has a bitter taste. Fruit is the most toxic part of the plant.

. The seeds are imbedded in a whitish spongy flesh.

. Can be propagated by seeds, or root segments.

. Dies off in autumn.

. Germinates in spring after rain, developing a large taproot, and long trailing stems in spring and summer.

. Found in arid, or semi arid regions on disturbed sandy loam.

. Native to S Africa, found in most Australian states.



Picture: *Citrullus colocynthis*

Further Reading:

- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981
- . Lamp & Collett. Field Guide to Weeds in Australia 1976
- . Parsons and Cuthbertson. Noxious Weeds of Australia. 2001.
- . Simmonds, Holst and Bourke. Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Australian Weeds to Goats. 2000.
- . Steginga. Poisonous Plants, Home, Garden and Bush 2003