

Citrullus lanatus

Common name:

Bitter melon, Wild melon

Palatability to Livestock:

Low palatability.

Toxicity to Goats:

Low risk toxicity.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Potentially toxic to all grazing animals.

Poisonous Principle:

Unknown.

Effects:

Signs and symptoms;

Severe diarrhoea, in humans.

Health and Production Problems;

Dehydration and weight loss.

Treatment;

Be aware of potential stock problems.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Use goats.
- . Repeated cultivation and herbicides.
- . Hand pull and burn before fruits form.
- . This is a declared “Noxious Weed” in Victoria and parts of Western Australia.

Comments:

- . Rarely eaten by livestock.
- . An annual, prostrate or climbing vine, up to three metres long.
- . Reproduces by bird, animal or windblown seed.
- . The leaves are deeply lobed, with short hairs on the lower surface.
- . Single yellow flowers appear in the leaf axils.

- . The fruit is fairly small, green mottled with white, and bitter to taste.
- . Germinates in spring, rapidly developing a deep taproot.
- . Produces vines in summer, flowers, and then dies off.
- . Drought tolerant.
- . The plant has a foetid odour when crushed, and otherwise, an unpleasant smell.
- . It is rarely eaten by most livestock, except when ripe.
- . Common on roadsides, and in cultivation, both on the coast and inland.



Picture: *Citrullus lanatus*

Further Reading:

- . Auld and Medd. Weeds. 1992
- . Brooke and McGarva. Glove box guide. 1998
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981.
- . Parsons and Cuthbertson. Noxious Weeds of Australia. 2001
- . Simmonds, Holst and Bourke. Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Australian Weeds to Goats. 2000
- . Swarbrick and Skarratt. Bushweed 2 Database.1997