

## *Hypericum perforatum*

### **Common name:**

St John's wort, Goat weed

### **Palatability to Livestock:**

High, before flowering.

### **Toxicity to Goats:**

Moderate risk.

### **Toxicity to Other Species:**

Toxic to horses, cattle and sheep.

### **Poisonous Principle:**

Hypericin and pseudohypericin.

### **Effects:**

#### *Signs and symptoms;*

- . Mild diarrhoea,
- . Skin irritation, especially round head,
- . Reddening and swelling of face and ears,
- . Hind limb weakness,
- . Increased pulse and body temperature,
- . Excess salivation, and panting.

#### *Health and Production Problems;*

- . Affected animals avoid the sun,
- . Rub sore faces raw, resulting in scabs.
- . Chronic ill-thrift and loss of productivity,

#### *Treatment;*

- . Provide shade.
- . Try local application of Condy's crystals.

### **Integrated Control Strategy:**

- . Goats will control this weed in native pasture, allowing cattle and sheep to be run as well.
- . Herbicides and superphosphate at high rates.
- Spray with 2,4-D, Grazon® or Glyphosate, in October/November, at flowering.
- . Biological controls are being tested.

### **Comments:**

- . Perennial with extensive creeping rhizomes.

- . Flowering upright branched stems up to one metre high, grow from a central woody crown.
- . Leaves are opposite and narrow with no stalks.
- . Margins usually curved downwards, and with a blunt tip.
- . Leaves are a yellow-green, dotted with clear oil glands that give a perforated appearance when held to the light.
- . Flowers are bright yellow, shiny and obvious, in clusters at branch tips, with five petals.
- . Fruit are reddish brown capsules, seeds are cylindrical and black.
- . Spread is by seed in sticky capsules, and suckering.
- . Native to Europe and Asia, naturalized in most parts of Australia, coastal slopes and tablelands of NSW.
- . Danger is greatest when feed is scarce or when the plant is young.
- . Lesions only appear in sunny weather.
- . Goats are more resistant to this weed.



Picture: *Hypericum perforatum*  
Helen Simmonds. Calga NSW.

### **Further Reading:**

- . Allan, Holst and Campbell, Weed Control Using Goats. MLA and NSW Dept Ag. 1999
- . Blood. Environmental Weeds for SE Australia. CRC Weed Management Systems. 2003.
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981.
- . Kohnke. Feeding and Nutrition of Horses. 1998.
- . Parsons and Cuthbertson. Noxious Weeds of Australia. 2001
- . Simmonds, Holst and Bourke. Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Australian Weeds to Goats. 2000.