

Lolium spp

Common name:

Ryegrass, Perennial ryegrass,

Palatability to Livestock:

High at all stages.

Toxicity to Goats:

Low risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Potentially toxic to sheep, cattle and horses.

Poisonous Principle:

- . Lolitremes, and sporidesmin,
- . Corynetoxins and ergot toxins,
- . Nitrates.

Effects:

Signs and symptoms;

- . "Ryegrass staggers".
- . Lolitremes can cause severe incoordination, together with severe body tremors.
- . Sporidesmin can cause liver damage that results in photosensitization of unpigmented or unprotected skin areas, particularly the face and head.
- . Ergot toxins can cause hyperthermia, together with growth, lactation and reproduction problems.

Health and Production Problems;

- . Cessation of lolitremes in the diet is followed by recovery within days.
- . Full recovery from sporidesmin may take months, otherwise chronic ill thrift is possible, or death.
- . Keep stock off rye grass when rapid regrowth occurs after rain.
- . Stock may drown if too much effort is required to access water.

Treatment;

- . Keep stock quiet, and remove them from affected pasture, until ryegrass matures.
- . Both forms of poisoning can be lethal.

Information included in this Info Sheet was obtained from the source documents, and no responsibility will be accepted by the compiler.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Be aware of potential stock problems.

Comments:

- . Tall, hairless, perennial, or annual, tufted grass, up to 90 cms high, with erect or spreading stems, growing in winter and spring.
- . Leaf blades are long, with two ear-like extensions where they join the stem, soft bright green and narrow.
- . Flowerhead is a spike.
- . Toxins have been derived from a parasitic fungus.
- . Ryegrass staggers shows itself in animals grazing short dried-up grass, with little leaf, after mowing for hay, short regrowth, or stemmy.
- . Poisoning is more common from January to May, young animals are most affected.
- . This plant is only affected by these problems in particular geographic areas, and then only in some years.
- . Pollen can cause allergies in humans.
- . Flowering is from spring to summer.



Picture: *Lolium spp* Ciba Geigy

Further Reading;

- . Auld and Medd. Weeds 1979.
- . Dowling and McKenzie. Poisonous Plants. 1993
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981
- . McBarron. Poisonous Plants, Handbook. 1983.