

Phytolacca spp

Common name:

Inkweed, Pokeweed, Dye berry,

Palatability to Livestock:

Moderate at all stages.

Toxicity to Goats:

Not known to be toxic.

Toxicity to Other Species:

- . Humans, domestic pets and livestock.
- . Maybe cattle, poultry, pigs.

Poisonous Principle:

- . Toxic alkaloids,
- . Phytolaccatoxin, a resin,
- . Phytolaccigenin, a triterpene compound,
- . Saponins and other unknowns.

Effects:

Signs and symptoms;

- . Gastroenteritis,
- . Irritation to the mouth.
- . In humans, vision disturbances, tiredness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea.

Health and Production Problems;

- . Staining of fleece.
- . In humans, a skin and eye irritant.

Treatment;

Be aware of potential problems.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Sever the roots deep down and remove the plant. Cultivate, and pull out seedlings.

Comments:

- . An erect, short lived herbaceous perennial which can grow to well over a metre high.
- . Brittle spreading branches, and red stems growing from a large tap root.

- . Leaves are alternate, light green, long, smooth, soft, pointed, oval shaped, with reddish stems.
- . Greenish white small flowers, in dense spikes, flowers close together, at end of branches, appearing in the upper levels of the plant.
- . Berries, turning purplish when ripe, succulent with red juice, near the ends of branches.
- . Juicy black berries leave purple stains on fleece and coats.
- . Plants give off an odour when damaged.
- . Taproots can grow very large, a hand span in width, and up to a metre deep.
- . Occurs as a weed in all mainland states, mainly in areas of good rainfall.
- . Native to tropical America, found in all parts of Australia.
- . The plant dies off in winter, but the dry sticks remain as a skeleton, the roots resprouting in spring.



Picture: *Phytolacca spp*
Helen Simmonds. Calga NSW

Further Reading:

- . Auld and Medd. Weeds. 1992
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981.
- . Kohnke. Feeding and Nutrition of Horses. 1998
- . Lamp and Collett. Field Guide to Weeds in Australia. 1976
- . Cunningham, Mulham, Milthorpe and Leigh. Plants of Western NSW. 1999
- . Roth. Weeds. Friend or Foe. 2001
- . Shepherd. Pretty but Poisonous. 2004.