

Stachys arvense

Common name:

Stagger weed, Hedge nettle, Mint weed.

Palatability to Livestock:

Moderate.

Toxicity to Goats:

Moderate risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Toxic to sheep, cattle and horses.

Poisonous Principle:

Unknown, central nervous system toxin.

Effects:

Signs and Symptoms:

- . Hind leg weakness,
- . Abnormalities in gait after some weeks,
- . Staggers, or shivers after exercise,
- . Knuckling over at the fetlocks.

Health and Production Problems:

- . Weight loss.
- . Stock may die from secondary infections.

Treatment:

- . Most stock recover when taken off the weed.
- . Be aware of potential stock problems.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Herbicides, Group B or C.
- . Control achieved by pasture management.

Comments:

- . A sprawling, annual herb, growing up to 30 cms high, with a strong mint odour when crushed.
- . Square stems are softly and weak, square in cross section, and softly hairy.
- . Leaves are on short stalks, flared at the base, opposite, oval, pale dull yellow-green and slightly toothed.

. Small flowers are tubular, surrounded by a long calyx, pale pink to purple, in opposite groups, in forks of leaves, with two lips.

. A similar plant, *L. amplexicaule*, or deadnettle, does not have stalks on the leaves below the flowers.

. Native to Europe, found in all Australian states, on old cultivated land, stubble and roadsides.

. Grows mainly in autumn, winter and spring.

. Causes staggers or shivers, mainly in horses, also sheep and cattle, noticeable particularly after exercise.

. Most cases occur in August to October.



Picture: *Stachys arvense* Weed Control; Lucerne. 1992

Further Reading:

- . Dowling and McKenzie. Poisonous Plants. 1994.
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981.
- . Lamp and Collett. Field Guide to Weeds in Australia. 1979.
- . McBarron. Poisonous Plants Handbook. 1983.