

Echium vulgare

Common name:

Blue thistle, Vipers bugloss,

Palatability to Livestock:

High at flowering.

Toxicity to Goats:

Moderate risk.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Horses, pigs, cattle, and in excess to sheep.

Poisonous Principle:

Pyrrolizidine alkaloids.

Echiumine and echiumidine alkaloids.

Effects:

Signs and symptoms;

- . Loss of condition and depression.
- . Colic and staggers.
- . Lung and liver damage after prolonged exposure.

Health and Production Problems;

- . Liver damage,
- . Accumulated copper can kill the animal,
- . Convalescence is protracted.

Treatment;

None.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Use goats to reduce flowering.
- . Spray graze, and pasture improvement.
- . Biological control agents are being tested.
- . Declared "Noxious" in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania.

Comments:

- . Annual or perennial plant, up to 90cms high, covered with bristles.
- . Stems often spotted with red blotches.

. Basal leaves are narrow and pointed, in a rosette, stalkless and spear shaped, leaf veins are longitudinal, not branched as in Patersons Curse.

. Flowers are on a spike, in rows, appearing several weeks later than Patersons curse. Smaller and more blue in colour.

. This plant is used in many herbal medicines as a diuretic, treatment for fevers, nervous disorders, and for snake and other poisonous bites.



Picture: *Echium vulgare*
Weed control in Lucerne. 1992

Further Reading:

- . Blood, Environmental Weeds for SE Australia. CRC Weed Management Systems. 2003
- . Cribb and Cribb. Wild Medicine in Australia 1990
- . Cunningham, Mulham, Milthorpe and Leigh. Plants of Western NSW. 1999
- . Parsons and Cuthbertson. Noxious Weeds of Australia. 2001
- . Simmonds, Holst and Bourke. Palatability and Potential Toxicity of Australian Weeds to Goats. 2000
- . Wilson. Some Plants are Poisonous. 1997