


Livestock Ledger

by
Chester D. Hughes

Extension Livestock Specialist



COMMON POISONOUS PLANTS

While most plants are beneficial, some are hazardous to animals and human life. Pennsylvania has about 100 toxic plants and some of these are responsible for deaths of domestic livestock every year.

The number of cases of toxicosis (plant poisoning) in livestock far outweighs those reported for humans. Accurate statistics are not available, but it is estimated that several thousand animals die annually in the U.S. from plant toxicosis.

With houses springing up everywhere in southeast Pennsylvania, the rural/urban interface is dramatically increasing. Many farm neighbors are unfamiliar with the plants that are toxic and many of them are found in our home landscapes. Homeowners bordering farmland or pastures should not throw yard waste over the fence or onto cropland without consulting the farmer or landowner.

Following are some common plants that are poisonous to farm animals.

- *Garden Iris* - Grown around the home as an ornamental plant, the iris contains an irritant in the leaves or root stalks which can produce gastroenteritis if ingested by livestock in sufficient amounts.

- *Holly* - Common holly, a favored ornamental in landscapes around the home, has berries that are poisonous and cause vomiting, diarrhea, and stupor in animals if ingested in large amounts.

- *Morning Glory* - Hogs, sheep,

cattle, and goats are especially susceptible to poisoning from overdoses of the hallucinogenic seeds produced by the morning glory.

- *Bracken Fern* - This plant is poisonous in a fresh or dried condition causing rough hair coats, listless attitudes, and mucous discharge in ruminant animals such as sheep, cattle, and goats. Elevated temperatures, swelling of the neck, and difficult breathing may occur. Monogastrics, like swine may show anorexia and incoordination.

- *Rhubarb* - The flat leaf blade is the toxic part of the rhubarb plant that causes staggering, excessive salivation, convulsions, and death in most classes of livestock.

- *English Ivy* - All species of livestock have exhibited toxicosis from English Ivy with symptoms including local irritation, excessive salivation, nausea, excitement, difficult breathing, severe diarrhea, thirst and coma.

- *Wild Cherry* - As far as plants go, wild cherry is probably the most common cause of livestock poisoning known. The most common exposure occurs when limbs are blown down or are trimmed and thrown into a fenced area. The wilted leaves are toxic and cause anxiety, staggering, falling down, convulsions, rolling of eyes, tongue hanging out, loss of sensation, and dilated pupils. The animal then becomes quiet, bloats and dies within a few hours of ingestion.

- *Yew* - This popular, needlelike shrub grown around the home

contains poisonous alkaloids. Symptoms of yew poisoning are gastric distress, diarrhea, vomiting, tremors, dilated pupils, respiratory difficulty, weakness, fatigue, collapse, coma, convulsions, circulatory failure, and death. Survival after yew poisoning is rare.

- *Oaks* - Acorns and young shoots can cause severe poisoning, especially if eaten in quantity. Cattle, sheep, horses, and swine will display anorexia, constipation that develops into diarrhea, gastroenteritis, thirst and excessive urination.

- *Mountain Laurel* - Native or wild Mountain Laurel, rhododendron and azalea are all considered poisonous and highly toxic to ruminants. Symptoms of poisoning include anorexia; repeated swallowing; profuse salivation; watering of the mouth, eyes, and nose; loss of energy; slow pulse; low blood pressure, incoordination; dullness and depression. Death is preceded by coma.

Controlling Fly Populations

There are more than 10 million horses raised in the United States for pleasure riding, breeding, and racing. There are also 3.2 million horse owners, who provide their horses with proper housing facilities. They must also maintain proper environmental conditions for their horses, but the fly can cause many problems for horse and other types of livestock production enterprises.

Housing facilities for horses basically consist of tie stalls, box stalls, or open sheds, and large amounts of sawdust, or wood shavings are typically used as bedding. The numerous edges and corners in the stalls, and the large amounts of bedding soaked with urine and manure provide an ideal fly breeding habitat.

Also, a horse produces about 40 pounds of manure per day, and this, combined with bedding, spilled feed, and water, provides an excellent environment for fly breeding. The time-consuming and difficult task of cleaning out stalls with hand tools also presents a disposal problem. If the manure

is piled, the piles can support large amounts of fly breeding.

Other livestock such as sheep and goats present similar problems of fly control as horses because housing is similar. Sheep and goats are usually housed in open sheds or indoor pens with ample bedding, spilled feed and water, and accumulated urine and manure providing ideal conditions for fly production. Manure removal and disposal for sheep and goats is also a problem because manure removal is practiced less frequently than in horse enterprises. Sheep and goats also spend more time sleeping and eating in their shelters than horses and therefore they create a larger fly breeding problem.

Housing for sheep, goats, and horses should be located on well-drained sites and graded so that surface water does not enter the sheds. Improper drainage and leaking waterers are the major contributors to wet bedding, which encourages fly breeding.

Following is a fly control

checklist for livestock and horse facilities:

Potential major fly breeding areas:

- Corners and edges of stalls
- Under feed mangers
- Under waterers
- Margins and under stored hay and grain
- old feed in bunkers
- wet spilled feed
- Piles of manure and bedding
- Wet bedding due to entrance of surface water.

Control measures:

- Clean stalls frequently
 - Ventilate well to dry bedding
 - Compact and cover piles of removed manure and bedding
 - Clean up spilled feed frequently
 - Grade to prevent infusion by surface water
 - Residual insecticide spray on surfaces and adjacent vegetation
 - Mist for adult fly control as needed
 - Fly bait stations
 - Larviciding.
- Contributed by Jeff Bollinger

4-H Regional Driving Clinics Set

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.)—Well-known carriage driving judge and clinician Lore Homer will conduct a series of 4-H regional driving clinics in June.


A registered judge for both the American Driving Society and the American Horse Shows Association, Homer has been successful in all phases of pleasure and combined driving. She has shown the Morgan Open Competition Champion for several years and the 1989 World Champion Morgan in Carriage Driving. Last year, Homer won both the Devon Horse Show Single Horse 4-Wheel Division and Single Horse Championship.

Clinic participants will learn correct procedures for training, harnessing, and driving horses and ponies, with emphasis on proper turnout and safety techniques for handling and driving. Current 4-H driving rules and procedures will

also be discussed.


Clinics will be held on June 19 at the Lawrence County Fairgrounds in New Castle, June 20 at the Centre County Fairgrounds in Centre Hall, June 21 at the Montvale Farm in Forksville (Sullivan County), and June 22 at the Berks County 4-H Center Show Grounds in Leesport. All clinics begin at 3:00 p.m. and are limited to 20 horses each. Cost is \$5 for 40-H members and \$10 for non-members with horses or ponies and carts. Spectators will be admitted for \$2.

You must preregister before June 15 for these popular driving clinics. Verification of current rabies vaccination is required. For more information or to register, contact Phil Hoy in Lawrence County, (412) 654-2741, Cindy Gray in Centre County (814) 364-9907, Rick Smith in Sullivan County (717) 928-8941, or Deb Dietrich in Berks County (610) 378-1327.



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