



Jimsonweed



Photo by: Patrick J. Alexander
Hosted by the USDA-NRCS
PLANTS Database

Plant Characteristics

Datura stramonium: This is a foul-smelling glabrous annual, .5 to 1.5 m tall with a green to purple-tinged stems. The leaves, resemble a poinsettia, are alternate, coarsely and irregularly toothed, 7 to 15 cm long, 2 to 12 cm wide. Flowers are large white to lavender, tubular (funnel shaped), 7 to 10 cm (2-5 inches long and 1-2 inches across). The fruit is a distinctive, hard, prickly, many seeded capsule that splits into four sections. This erect dry spiny capsule is 2.5 to 4 cm long and 2 to 2.5 cm wide and contains many shiny black seeds. The plant is native to the tropics but is naturalized to most of Illinois and the Midwest. It is most abundant in fertile fields and gardens and barn lots.

Toxicity

The toxic principles of this common hog lot and barnyard plant are the alkaloids atropine, hyoscyamine and scopolamine. All parts of the plant are considered poisonous, whether green or dry. Usually poisoning occurs from eating the dry plant in hay or silage or the seeds mixing in grain. However, the seeds are particularly poisonous. Usually, this plant is not eaten except when other forage is unavailable. Cattle and swine are primarily affected, but horses, poultry, dogs and humans have been affected. Cows can be poisoned by consuming one-half to one pound of the green plant.

Symptoms

Early symptoms include a weak and rapid pulse and heartbeat. The eyes are dilated, the mouth and other mucous membranes are dry, and animals may appear blind. Later, slow breathing may be observed as well as lowered temperature, convulsions or coma. After eating the plants sheep have been observed to have abnormal leg movements, disturbed vision, intense thirst and to bite at imaginary objects in the air.

Pregnant sows consuming jimson weed during their second and third months of gestation have produced deformed pigs. Some pigs may be born alive but exhibit varying degrees of flexed hips, stifles and forelegs. The hocks may be overextended.

Treatment

Non-specific. Weeds should be destroyed in order to prevent problems.

Information Sources

- Poisonous Plant of the Southern United States
- <http://plants.usda.gov/>
- Bulletin 762 Horse Nutrition, Ohio State University.

