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Poisonous Plants and Goats

Larry Varner, PhD

Many view the goat as a browser that will thrive when it eats just about anything. On the contrary, there are numerous plants that can kill a goat.

Good Health

Many goats, especially does, are unable to get enough nutrients from browse alone to meet their needs. When goats ingest poisonous plants, it's usually by accident, while browsing. But a major reason for the toxic poisoning of goats comes as a result of starvation. To provide the nutrition goats need to reach their full potential, supplemental feeding is needed. More about that later.

Sound Management

Obviously, the best way to decrease the chances of accidental poisoning is to minimize the chances that a hungry goat will come in contact with dangerous plants. As when any toxic plant is consumed, it is the size of the dose, and the poison present in the plant, that will determine whether the animal lives or dies. The following list is devoted to the caprine species, and to many of the plants out there that can kill them. It is a fairly comprehensive list of plants commonly found in areas with goats, but may not be 100 percent complete.

Alkaloid Containing Plants: Any of a large class of organic, nitrogen-containing ring compounds that have a bitter taste, that are usually water-insoluble and alcohol-soluble, that form water-soluble salts, and usually exhibit pharmacological action, as nicotine, morphine, or quinine.

* Aconite
* Allspice
* Black Snake Root
* Bloodroot
* Blue Cohosh
* Boxwood
* Celandine
* Common Poppy
* Crotalaria
* Crow Poison
* Death Camas
* Dicentra
* False Hellebore
* False Jessamine
* Fume Wort
* Hellebore
* Hemp
* Horse Nettle
* Indian Hemp
* Indian Poke
* Jimson Weed
* Larkspur
* Lobelia
* Lupines
* Marijuana
* Monkshood
* Moonseed
* Nightshade
* Pink Death Camas
* Poison Darnel
* Poison Hemlock
* Poison Rye Grass
* Rattle weed
* Rock Poppy
* Senecio
* Spider Lily
* Spotted Cowbane
* Spotted Water Hemlock
* Stagger Grass
* Stagger weed
* Sweet Shrub
* Thorn Apple
* Varebells
* Wild Parsnip
* Wolfs-Bane
* Yellow Jessamine

Cyanogenetic Containing Plants: These plants are usually deadly when damaged or frozen.

* Arrow Grass
* Black Locust
* Blue Cohosh
* Broomcarn
* Buckeye
* Cherry
* Choke Cherry
* Corn Cockle
* Dogbane
* Elderberry
* Hemp
* Horse Nettle
* Indian Hemp
* Ivy
* Johnson Grass
* Kafir
* Laurel
* Leucothoe
* Lily of the Valley
* Maleberry
* Marijuana
* Milkweed
* Milo
* Nightshade
* Oleander
* Rhododendron
* Sevenbark
* Silver
* Sneezewood
* Sorghum
* Stagger Brush
* Sudan Grass
* Velvet Grass
* White Snakeroot
* Wild Black Cherry
* Wild Hydrangea

Glucosides - Glycosides Containing Plants: Any of the class of compounds that yield a sugar and a noncarbohydrate upon hydrolisis.

Plants That Cause Mechanical Injury: Some plants and shrubs have physical characteristics that would be injurious to animals—thorned plants as an example. Certainly some thorned and spiked plants may be eaten, but once they reach the palate, punctures and tears can occur internally, which cause a great degree of injury. Also, certain plants are known to 'twine' or 'bind' causing great intestinal difficulties.

Saponin Containing Plants: Any of a group of amorphous glucosidal compounds of steroid structure, characterized by an ability to form emulsions and to foam in aqueous solutions, and used as detergents.

* Bagpod
* Coffee Weed
* Purple Sesban
* Rattlebox
* Soapwort

Photosensitizing Plants: This type of plant will cause a reaction whereas the ingredients interact with light. An animal ingesting such a plant is susceptible to sunburn, heat-related illnesses, etc. Not all photosensitizing are considered extremely harmful, however, dependent upon climatic conditions/light, this class of plants can do great damage if the animal is not monitored.

* Buckwheat
* Goat Weed
* Klamath Weed
* Lantana
* Rape
* St. John's Wort

Tannic Acid Containing Plants: An interesting category. Most commonly found in Oak leaves, however there is the belief that fresh, green oak leaves are soothing to sick goats.

Resin Containing Plants: This area is also under research since it has been a common practice for many goat owners to feed their discarded Christmas trees to their goats. Apparently this is not such a good idea as, while it may not produce immediate, noticeable results, it can be a cause of abortions months later.

Good Nutrition

As mentioned previously, accidental poisoning is often an outcome of starvation. So one of the best ways to avoid poisoning is to make sure your goats are getting the nutrition they require. A good choices is……need food reco.