

Pyrrolizidine poisoning

a) Heliotrope

- Sheep that have grazed “Heliotrope” on vendors property prior to purchase are vulnerable to subsequent mortality from acute liver failure with stress such as transport, shearing, mustering, normal seasonal nutritional stress, or stress associated with normal lambing
- Most likely to be found in the 300-500mm rainfall zones with predominantly winter rainfall. Grows in summer. Usually takes 2 summers of grazing to be toxic.



Diagram 1: *Heliotropium europaeum* source S Crane

<http://weedman.horsham.net.au/weeds/heliotrope.htm>

(“Common name “Heliotrope” or *Potato weed*, *Barooga weed*, *Caterpillar weed*.)

b) Patterson’s curse

Patterson’s curse is toxic for up to 6 months over winter and spring whereas Heliotrope is only toxic for 2- 3 months over summer. As Heliotrope has 5- 10 x the pyrrolizidine alkaloid (PA) levels of Patterson’s curse, have higher PA poisoning with heliotrope



Diagram 2 *Echium plantagineum* (common name Patterson’s curse or Salvation Jane)

Clinical signs include yellowing (jaundice) of whites of the eyes. If you open up the carcass it will have very yellow body fat with distinctive gun metal sheen to kidneys.

There is no treatment and fatalities following very short illness can keep on occurring for a few years brought on by stress.

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but Livestock logic and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.