



# Tarbush, Blackbrush

*Flourensia cernua*

Tarbush is a strongly aromatic, perennial shrub and a member of the sunflower family. The plant's height may vary from 1 foot tall on dry sites to more than 6 feet in deep, overflow areas.

The leaves are alternate, smooth along the edges and oval or oblong. Flowers are solitary in the leaf axils, forming a leafy flowering stem in the fall.

## Distribution and habitat

Tarbush is common on dry plains, hills and mesas from counties just east of the Pecos River in Texas, west to Arizona and south to Mexico. Regions: 7, 8, 10.

## Toxic agent

Tarbush may poison sheep, goats and cattle. The toxin in tarbush is unknown. In experiments, sheep and goats were force-fed tarbush fruits, which were lethal at about 1 percent of the animal's weight. Individual susceptibility varied considerably, and the difference between toxic and lethal doses was small. In moderate amounts, the foliage was not toxic.

## Livestock signs

On the range, clinical signs appear a day or less after an animal eats a toxic amount of the plant. Depending on the amount ingested, death may follow within

24 to 72 hours, or occasionally longer. Some animals recover rapidly after showing clinical signs for several days to a week.

Signs are modified somewhat by the severity of poisoning, but generally consist of:

- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal pain
- Reluctance to move
- Occasional respiratory distress

Acute cases may salivate profusely. Animals generally remain on their feet until shortly before dying without struggle. Poisonings occur mostly in January through March after the fruit has matured but before it falls.

## Integrated management strategies

Tarbush is extremely unpalatable, and is grazed only if animals are starving or have severe phosphorus deficiencies. Avoid overgrazing and use proper supplemental feeding programs (including phosphorus).

Spike 20P® controls tarbush on a large-broadcast basis. For aerial or ground broadcast applications, apply Spike 20P® at 0.75 to 1 pound a.i./acre (3.75 to 5 pounds of pellets).

Follow herbicide treatments with proper stocking rates and good grazing management practices.

