



Abnormal Leaf-flower

Phyllanthus abnormis

Abnormal leaf-flower is a small, bushy annual or short-lived perennial herb. The plant is a member of the spurge family and is also known as sand leaf-flower.

It branches primarily from the base and grows to 6 to 12 inches tall. It flowers from May to August.

Distribution and habitat

Abnormal leaf-flower usually grows in deep sands or sandy soils in the Rolling and High Plains, Trans-Pecos and South and South-central regions in Texas. It also occurs in Oklahoma and Mexico. Regions: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10.

Toxic agent

Abnormal leaf-flower is toxic to sheep, cattle and goats. Sheep and goats are more resistant than cattle. The toxic agent involved is unknown.

Feeding experiments have shown that the amount of plant needed for it to be toxic varies considerably depending on where the plants grow, how much toxicity is lost when they are dried, and differences in susceptibility of the various test animals.

In goats, the least amount of fresh plant material necessary to produce death was 1.5 percent of the animal's weight.

Livestock signs

Poisoned calves showed:

- Listlessness for several days
- Anorexia
- Ceaseless walking
- Periods of nonbelligerent charging about

Diarrhea and occasional rectal prolapse were observed in some animals. Exhaustion was followed by prostration and death.

Postmortem examination may show an orange or yellow liver and small purplish hemorrhagic spots on the heart or the mesentery (the membranes enfolding some internal organs).

The plant is also suspected of causing hepatogenous photosensitization.

Integrated management strategies

As with most spurges, abnormal leaf-flower is unpalatable to livestock. As such, grazing management practices ensuring enough desirable range forage significantly reduce livestock losses to abnormal leaf-flower.

Phosphorus supplementation may also reduce the incidence of poisoning from this plant. If signs are noticed, move livestock to a fresh pasture to alleviate the problem.

