



Leatherstem

Jatropha dioica

Leatherstem is an erect, perennial, shrubby plant with simple or somewhat lobed leaves. It is a member of the spurge family (Euphorbiaceae). The stems are quite flexible, thus the name leatherstem.

Distribution and habitat

Leatherstem grows on gravelly bluffs, hillsides and ravine slopes of the South Texas Plains, the Edwards Plateau and Trans-Pecos areas. It also grows south into Mexico. Regions: 2, 6, 7, 10.

Toxic agent

Leatherstem is poisonous to sheep and goats. The major toxic agents are **phorbol esters**, which severely irritate the stomach lining.

A limited number of feeding experiments by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station found that leatherstem was toxic but not fatal to a sheep fed 2 percent of its body weight of green leaves. Seeds were fatal to a lamb

at 3 percent of its body weight in three doses over 12 days.

A goat fed 3.7 percent of its body weight of leatherstem leaves developed progressive anemia and died.

Livestock signs

Signs for leatherstem include:

- Severe gastric inflammation
- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Integrated management strategies

Leatherstem is relatively **unpalatable** to livestock. Grazing management practices that improve or maintain good quality range condition and avoid overgrazing reduce the incidence of poisoning from leatherstem.

Proper mineral supplementation programs, especially providing phosphorus, also reduce livestock losses to the plant.



↖ Leaf
Fruit and whole plant ↗
Whole plant ↓