



# Tansy Mustard

*Descurainia pinnata*

Tansy mustard is an annual cool-season **forb** growing to 2 feet tall. It is usually single-stemmed, leafy and covered with fine, gray hairs.

Leaves are placed **alternately** along wavy stems, with each divided into many small segments.

Flowers vary from yellow to whitish, occurring in long clusters at stem ends. Plants flower in February through May.

The very distinctive fruits are long, round, slender, two-celled **capsules** filled with many small, waxy seeds.

## Distribution and habitat

Tansy mustard is distributed widely throughout the southern and western United States up to 7,000 feet in elevation. Heavy stands may form on dry, sandy soils in arid areas. Abundance increases after moderate or heavy winter rains in the arid southwest. Regions: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

## Toxic agent

The toxic agent is unknown. Large quantities of the plant must be consumed before poisoning occurs. Tansy mustard also accumulates toxic levels of nitrate.

## Livestock signs

Cattle are the only kind of livestock reported to be poisoned. The

first clinical sign is partial or complete blindness (blind staggers). Animals wander aimlessly until exhausted, or may stand pushing their head against a solid object for hours.

Next, or along with blindness, comes an inability to use the tongue or to swallow (paralyzed tongue). Cattle may stand at water unable to drink, or try unsuccessfully to graze.

## Integrated management strategies

A simple and effective treatment is to administer 2 to 3 gallons of water (with nourishment such as cottonseed meal if the animals are seriously weak) twice daily by stomach tube. With this treatment, clinical signs gradually disappear.

Tansy mustard is relatively non-toxic, so moderate amounts may be desirable. Furthermore, stands thick enough to lead to the heavy consumption necessary for poisoning do not appear every year. Because of this, herbicidal control is not recommended except where dense stands occur near watering and holding facilities and other areas of high livestock use.

Good range management practices and grazing a mixture of cattle, sheep and/or goats may help prevent excessive intake by cattle.

