Bag-Pod Sesbania

Sesbania vesicaria

Bag-pod sesbania is an annual herb in the legume family that grows to 6 to 10 feet tall. The leaves consist of 20 to 40 alternate leaflets. Drooping spikes of yellowish to coral-colored flowers appear in late summer.

The beaked pods consist of two membranes, the outer one thick and the inner one papery. Each holds two or three seeds. The pods persist on the plant long after the leaves have fallen. The kidney-shaped seeds have a prominent hilum, or eye.

Distribution and habitat

These plants grow in the eastern half of Texas and extend eastward through the coastal states to North Carolina. They are usually found in well-drained sandy sites in wetter regions and in low sandy areas subject to flooding in drier regions. Regions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

Toxic agent

Bag-pod sesbania contains sesbaimide, which is concentrated in the seed. Fresh green plants are unpalatable; only the mature dry seedpods and seeds are consumed. Animals pastured with the plant during the growing season are seldom poisoned, but naive ruminants, especially goats and cattle, are often poisoned when they are introduced to the dried plants in the fall and winter. Clinical observations indicate that newly mature seeds are more toxic than those that have weathered on the plant. The seeds of bag-pod sesbania *(S. vesicaria)* seem to be more toxic than those of sennabean *(S. drummondii).*

Livestock signs

Signs of poisoning occur within 1 or 2 days after consumption and can include:

- Depression
- Diarrhea
- Weakness
- Rapid heart rate
- Labored breathing
- Death

Death quickly follows the onset of clinical signs, which in many cases go unobserved. Seeds and/or seed fragments are routinely found in the rumen contents of animals that die from eating this plant.

Integrated management strategies

Avoid placing hungry, naive ruminants in pastures containing plants with mature seedpods. Fill newly introduced animals with hay before releasing them, and do not place them in heavily infested pastures without supplemental feed.

Heavy infestations can be eliminated by mowing and prevented by good range management practices, as these plants are poor competitors.

↖ Seedling

Pods ↗

Whole plant ↓