

Poisonous Plants & Toxic Substances

by Maxine K Kinne

Not all green plants are health food for goats. Numerous plants and other materials are poisonous, and it is our responsibility to be aware of them and protect our animals. It isn't easy to poison a well-fed goat because it's not hungry, but it happens occasionally, even with good management. Why are underfed goats more susceptible to poisons? They are hungry and less scrupulous about what they eat – all they want is a meal. Also, their general resistance is lower.

Immediate veterinary intervention is essential in any suspected poisoning, but it isn't always possible to save the victim; fatalities sometimes occur despite treatment. The best preventative measure is to fence goats in a safe area and to keep them there and well-fed all the time.

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Toxicity, the level of poisonousness, is dependent on many factors, including: the animal's age, individual body chemistry, susceptibility of individual animals, potency of the poison, quantity consumed, growing conditions of certain plants, season of the year, certain plant parts, and other variables. Some plants and materials are very toxic in small amounts, while others are cumulative and require consumption over a longer period of time. Some cause irreparable damage while the effects of others can be overcome with treatment and time.

It is best to consider all houseplants, flowering bulbs, evergreen shrubs and other landscaping plants to be poisonous to goats – that way you can avoid the most common causes of caprine poisoning. Other toxic materials frequently found around the home or on the farm are:

- creosote-treated wood
- excess grain consumption
- fertilizers
- herbicides
- insecticides
- lead paint
- medication overdoses
- pastures, freshly fertilized
- rodent poisons

SYMPTOMS OF POISONING, may vary from mild to extremely severe and include:

- bloat
- chronic wasting
- colic

- coma
- constipation
- convulsions
- cries of pain
- death
- dermatitis
- diarrhea
- difficult breathing
- dilated pupils
- fever
- frothing at the mouth
- hyper excitability
- lameness
- muscle spasms or tremors
- muscle weakness
- photosensitization
- rapid pulse
- salivation
- staggering
- vertigo
- vomiting
- weak pulse

IF POSIONING IS SUSPECTED, THE FOLLOWING STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN:

1. Prevent further exposure of the goat to poison.
2. Isolate the goat and make fresh water available.
3. Avoid stressing the goat.
4. Keep samples of suspected toxic material to aid diagnosis.
5. Call a veterinarian immediately for diagnosis and treatment.
6. Home remedies may worsen the condition – do not use them.

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[Webmaster note]

Ms. Kinne has been kind enough to provide NPGA with a link to an updated [list of some common poisonous plants](#) that she has compiled. The list is for reference purposes only. It, in no way, is a complete list as there are far too many poisonous plants to create a comprehensive list. Please contact your local Agricultural Extension Agent for specifics on poisonous plants in your area. If your goats (or other pets) do ingest one of these plants, be sure to call the [National Animal Poison Control Center](#).

Excerpts from:

Kinne, Maxine, ed. [Pygmy Goats: Best of Memo 2 \(1982-1987\)](#)

National Pygmy Goat Association: pp 150-151

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