

AN OUTBREAK OF BLINDNESS IN GOATS FOLLOWING BROWSING OF
NODDING BLUE LILY, *STYPANDRA GLAUCA*

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Abstract. Nodding blue lily, *Stypandra Glauca*, grows widely in N.S.W. and is particularly common in the Narrandera district. A related species, blindgrass *Stypandra imbricata*, which grows only in W.A., commonly poisons livestock. Feeding trials in the 1920's showed however, that nodding blue lily was not toxic to sheep, cattle or horses.

Twenty seven goats out of 427 became blind after grazing a hill paddock dominated by nodding blue lily. In addition approximately half the mob became depressed and inactive for several weeks. Blindness was due to irreversible damage to the optic nerves. The clinical signs and pathology observed in this outbreak were identical to those recorded in livestock poisoned by blindgrass in W.A.

Two healthy goats were fed 4-20 kg of nodding blue lily in an attempt to reproduce the disease. The plant was harvested each week for the trial from the affected property, commencing 3 weeks after the first natural cases of blindness were seen. Neither of the experimental goats became blind after 5 weeks of ingesting nodding blue lily.

We conclude that nodding blue lily is toxic to stock, but only for a brief period in its growth cycle. This corresponds to the time of flowering in spring and is associated with a dramatic increase in palatability for goats. Despite the possibility of poisoning which can be overcome by strategic grazing, nodding blue lily is useful browse for goats. The plant colonises rocky hill country favoured by goats and has been considered potentially useful by the Soil Conservation Service in revegetation projects.

REFERENCES

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