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Locoweed Management

Highly toxic locoweed causes health problems for both livestock and wildlife.

Research indicates the animals most susceptible to locoweed are horses, elk, cattle, sheep, deer and antelope.

About

Locoweed, a cool-season legume common in New Mexico, causes health problems for livestock and wildlife, which then cause economic losses for livestock producers.

There are two types of locoweed seen frequently in the state, Astragalus and Oxytropis. Of these, only three of the Astragalus and one of the Oxytropis genera are considered to be major problems, the woolly (purple loco), the garbancillo (Wooton's loco), the red-stemmed peavine (which also has a nitro toxin) and the white point (white loco or silky locoweed). All of these varieties are highly toxic.

Swainsonine is the toxic substance that causes health problems when ingested. It is known to inhibit enzymes and affects cell's capability to digest sugars.

Poisoning of animals is more prevalent when locoweed is green and the grass is brown. Livestock will typically eat locoweed prior to warm-season grass growth and again when those grasses start maturing in the late summer or early fall. This could mean there is a "safe" period between 90 and 120 days (from June to September) to graze locoweed-infested areas.

Get Involved

The simplest management solution is to deny livestock access to locoweed. However, there are steps people can take that have been proven to reduce locoweed poisoning.

- Remove any animals seen eating locoweed to reduce toxic effects.

- It is not recommended to graze locoweed-infested pastures until warm-season grass has started growing.

- Grazing locoweed-infested pastures for less than four weeks followed by grazing a locoweed-free pasture for up to six weeks may avoid the need to completely abandon locoweed pastures.

- Livestock will normally not graze locoweed unless they are forced. Forage monitoring is recommended to ensure an adequate quantity of desirable forage is available.

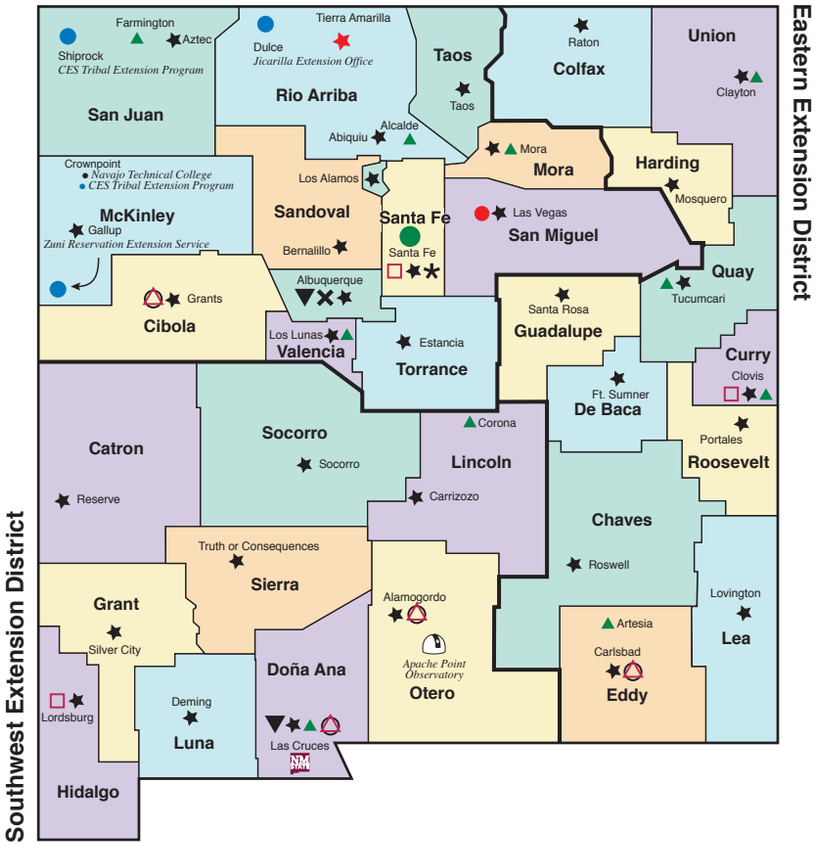
- Locoweed toxicity affects an animal's reproductive performance. Culling breeding animals that are open, proven low producers or perpetually in poor condition has been proven to reduce the number of locoweed eaters.

- Food aversion has been used in experimental settings and shows some promise as a management tool.

Contact

For more information on the locoweed management program, contact your local county Extension agent or the Department of Animal and Range Sciences. More information is available at aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/research/livestock_range/RR730/manGRAZ.pdf.

Northern Extension District



Facility Locations

- County Cooperative Extension Service Offices
- Satellite County Office
- Tribal Cooperative Extension Service Offices
- Agricultural Science and Research Centers
- Cooperative Extension Service District Offices
- University Government Affairs
- NMSU Community Colleges
- Admissions Office
- Santa Fe Ranch Demonstration Site
- NMSU Main Campus
- Apache Point Observatory
- CES/New Mexico Works Program
- Memorial Middle School Agricultural Extension and Education Center

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