

DEATH CAMAS

This material is from Guide to Poisonous Plants, Colorado State University, Dr. A.R. Knight

Links: http://southcampus.colostate.edu/poisonous_plants/index.cfm?countno=NO

http://co.laplata.co.us/departments_and_elected_officials/general_services/weed_management_of_fice/native_poisonous_plants

<http://www.elzorrocolorado.com/pacahealth/html/deathcamas.html>

Common Name: Death Camas

Botanic Name: *Zigadenus* spp.

Plant Family: Liliaceae

Habitat: There are about 15 species of Death Camas in North America that range in habitat from moist mountain valleys to the sandy hills and plains.

Animals Affected: Sheep, cattle, pigs, and humans



Death Camas

Additional Views



Plains death camas
(*Zigadenus venenosus*)



[GLOSSARY:](#)

[DEFINITIONS:](#)

Toxic Principle: Death camas has several steroidal alkaloids similar to those found in *Veratrum* (false hellebore). The bulb and mature leaves are most toxic. The alkaloids have potent hypotensive activity. Sheep show signs of poisoning after eating as little as 1/2 lb of the green plants.

Description: Hairless, perennials, with linear, grass-like, v-shaped, parallel-veined leaves arising basally from an onion-like bulb. The leaves are not hollow like those of onions, and do smell like onion. The inflorescence is a terminal raceme with numerous 6 petalled, small, white, cream to green flowers. The fruit is a 3 lobed capsule. Common species of death camas include: Showy or mountain deathcamas- *Z. elegans* Meadow death camas - *Z. venenosus*

Gastrointestinal: Excessive salivation, vomiting

Musculoskeletal: Muscular weakness, tremors, ataxia and prostration occur with death camas.

Treatment: There is no specific treatment for death camas poisoning. The injection of 2 mg of atropine sulfate and 8 mg picrotoxin per 100 lbs body weight is reported to be effective in treating early poisoning of sheep. Supportive therapy with intravenous fluids is helpful in combatting the hypotensive effects of the death camas. Bloat animals should be kept in a sternal position and a stomach tube passed to relieve rumen pressure.

Cardiovascular System:

Nervous System: Convulsions, coma and death

Diagnostic Tests: A diagnosis of death camas poisoning is usually based on finding an evidence of the plant being eaten and recognizing the plant parts in the rumen contents. Zygacine may be detectable in the rumen contents using mass spectrometry. Pulmonary congestion is the most significant post mortem finding.

Special Notes: Similar signs and death losses have occurred in sheep after eating stagger grass (*Amianthum muscaetoxicum*) a plant similar in appearance to death camas, and found in the Eastern United States from New York to Florida, and west to Arkansas.

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