

# Pimelea poisoning

Stock deaths confirmed in Western NSW as a result of *Pimelea* plants

Western Local Land Services is warning landholders to be on the lookout for *Pimelea* plants (commonly known as desert rice flower) following the sudden death in at least 20 cattle, as well as the acute diminishing condition in many more, on two properties in the Wilcannia area in mid-April.

## Introduction to Pimelea poisoning

Toxic *Pimelea* plants are native plants found throughout inland grazing regions of NSW and a number of other states. The plants have the capacity to cause significant economic impact on producers and the cattle industry through loss of production, stock deaths and the cost of supplementary feeding.

Desert rice flower, and a number of other *Pimelea* species, are known for being winter and spring annuals in Western NSW, however, they have been found to germinate following decent rainfalls on the back of dry seasons.

## What signs can landholders look for

The plants are often grazed inadvertently when hungry stock are introduced to new green pasture and they do not need to ingest much of the plant at any stage of its growth for it to be toxic.

Landholders who are unsure if their stock have ingested the plant should look for these signs:

- swelling under the jaw and brisket area
- severe sudden loss of weight
- foul smelling scours/diarrhoea
- rough coat
- sudden death.

There is no treatment or cure available, though if detected and moved from the source early enough, stock may survive, however landholders should move stock slowly and cautiously to avoid any further stress.



Feeding good quality hay and keeping stock off pasture which contain the plant is the best way to avoid the potentially disastrous effects.

## A landholder's experience

Doug Ferguson of "Yelta Station", Wilcannia, was shocked when he found a number of his cattle dead and many others in poor condition with little explanation as to the cause.

Doug contacted Western Local Land Services District Veterinarian, Jess van de Weyer, who conducted an on-property investigation that involved taking blood and faecal samples for analysis, as well as inspecting pasture.

Upon confirmation of *Pimelea* poisoning as the cause of death, Doug is using his experience to warn other landholders in the hope they don't suffer a similar fate.

"It has been a terrible experience to be truthful, I was quite annoyed at myself and felt bad toward the cattle," Doug said.

"But Jess has been great and I am really thankful for her work in diagnosing the problem and letting me know what I need to lookout for.

"Hopefully other landholders will be mindful of the plants in their paddock and if they aren't sure what the plant is, or why stock are unwell, be sure to contact Western Local Land Services and get them on the case."



Local Land  
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