



Small Ruminant Ramblings

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Azalea Toxicity in Goats *Serious poisoning, even death can result*

Azaleas can be toxic to goats, and even a small amount of the plant's foliage can result in poisoning.

The poisoning may be from an animal "browsing" among the azaleas (*Rhododendron indica*). Or occasionally, poisoning occurs due to well-meaning individuals throwing azalea clippings to nearby goats.

Azaleas are found worldwide and have been responsible for numerous instances of poisoning in livestock, humans and pets. These evergreen, semi-evergreen, or deciduous shrubs with flowers of various colors are frequently found as ornamentals in the southeastern United States. For goats, fresh foliage at 0.1 percent of the goat's body weight may be toxic (That means 0.1 pound or 1.6 ounces of fresh azalea foliage could be toxic to a 100 pound goat). Nectar and honey made from the flowers of these plants may also be toxic. Ingestion of toxic amounts of the azalea plant often results in development of the following clinical signs within six hours of exposure:

- Depression and head pressing
- Severe salivation
- Abdominal cramps and bloat
- Vomiting/regurgitation
- Muscle tremors

In severe cases, animals may develop an abnormal cardiac rhythm, hypotension (low blood pressure) convulsions and high fever (up to 106 degrees ° F). Occasionally, affected animals vomit and then inhale part of what they are throwing up, causing a severe pneumonia which may result in death. Diagnosis usually is made on the basis of a history of exposure and display of typical clinical signs. Finding plant parts in what an animal has regurgitated can also

be used to confirm the diagnosis. Recently, however, tests have been developed to detect the toxin, grayanotoxin, in the feces and/or urine of animals suspected of having consumed azaleas. This test can be used as a diagnostic tool when history is unavailable or clinical signs are deceptive.

There is no specific treatment for azalea toxicity. Supportive care, including administration of intravenous fluids, may be recommended by your veterinarian. Although animals can recover if treated promptly, azalea poisoning often is fatal for goats. Owners should make every effort to prevent exposure of goats to azaleas through such means as securely fencing them away from the plants. Goats seem to be attracted to the taste of azaleas and will readily consume them.

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