



# Coffee Senna

*Senna occidentalis*

Coffee senna is an erect, smooth, hairless, foul-smelling annual growing 2 to 6 feet tall.

Its ascending, branching stem has spirally arranged compound leaves with four to six pairs of leaflets. The leaflets are oval and lance shaped with pointed tips.

The linear seedpods are 4 to 6 inches long, tend to be erect and contain numerous compressed, dull brown or dull green seeds.

## Distribution and habitat

Coffee senna is found in East and South Texas and extends east to Florida and north to Virginia. It usually grows in sandy or loamy disturbed soil, often in colonies around pens or shade trees rather than uniformly distributed over a pasture. Regions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7.

## Toxic agent

Cattle, horses, goats and sheep have been poisoned by coffee senna. The specific chemical responsible for the toxicity is unknown, but it appears to be present throughout the plant. Generally, the unpalatable green plants are not consumed; the dried, mature seedpods are responsible for most poisonings,

which usually occur after frost. Plants that have dried after being cut or pulled up have also poisoned cattle, and they are the species most often poisoned in Texas.

## Livestock signs

Clinical signs of affected animals include:

- Diarrhea
- Weakness
- “Alert downers”—not depressed, will eat, but unable to rise
- Dark urine
- Death

Once an animal is down, it generally will not recover, even though it is bright-eyed and continues to eat and drink.

## Integrated management strategies

The best prevention is to eliminate the plants from a pasture to be used for cattle after frost.

Mechanical removal (pulling) is quite effective in many instances, as the plants are often confined to small areas. When larger areas are involved, use of pasture may need to be deferred.

