



Desert Spike

Oligomeris linifolia

Desert spike is a succulent, erect, annual cool-season plant reaching 14 to 15 inches tall.

The plant branches from the base. Its numerous leaves are linear shaped and grow to 1 inch long.

The species is the only plant of the mignonette family found in Texas.

Distribution and habitat

This plant is generally found on salt and clay flats, at the feet of boulders and on gravel bars along streams in the Rio Grande Valley and Trans-Pecos regions of Texas. Desert spike grows from Texas to California and south into northern Mexico. Regions: 6, 7, 10.

Toxic agent

The toxic agent involved in desert spike poisoning is unknown. Only cattle are known to have been poisoned by this plant in Texas.

Feeding trials have shown that seedlings and mature plants are toxic to calves fed 2.5 percent of their body weight of desert spike per day for 2 to 12 days.

Livestock signs

Cattle poisoned by desert spike exhibit central nervous system signs such as:

- Nervousness
- Salivation
- Trembling and weakness
- Apparent delirium
- Rapid breathing
- Collapse
- Prolonged coma accompanied by marked trembling

Signs may differ somewhat, and some poisoned cattle have appeared blind while not actually being blind. Desert spike poisonings are easily misdiagnosed as lead poisoning.

Integrated management strategies

Cattle find desert spike unpalatable. To reduce the incidence of livestock poisoning from this plant, manage grazing so animals have enough desirable forage available.

Proper mineral supplemental feeding programs, especially those providing phosphorus, may also help reduce losses to desert spike.

