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## Fly poison (stagger grass)

*Amianthium muscaetoxicum*



**P**erennial, subscapose, bulbous herb, 0.3 to 1.4 m tall. Leaves mostly basal, linear, 10 to 60 cm long, 0.4 to 2.3 cm wide. Flowers white, turning greenish in age; borne in dense racemes, 3 to 13 cm long. Found throughout the southern states east of the Mississippi River; mostly in moist, wooded slopes, meadows, open fields, and bogs.

### Toxicity

The highest concentration of the toxin, an alkaloid, is found in the bulb of the plant. The alkaloid, which is cumulative, is also found in the fruit and leaves. Animals consume the plant only when other forage is unavailable. Cases of toxicity occur in the spring, summer, and fall. Cattle and sheep are most commonly affected.

### Symptoms

Animals exhibit vomiting, frothing at the mouth, staggering, rapid respiration, subnormal temperature, and weakness. Death is caused by respiratory failure.

### Treatment

Keep animals quiet. Give sedatives. Administer gastric protectives by stomach tube unless this procedure excites the animal.