

## Jimsonweed *Datura stramonium*



Coarse, foul-smelling, glabrous annual, 0.5 to 1.5 m tall, with green or purple-tinged stems. Leaves alternate, coarsely and irregularly toothed, 7 to 15 cm long, 2 to 12 cm wide. Flowers large, white to lavender, funnellform, 7 to 10 cm long. Fruit an erect, dry, spiny capsule 2.5 to 4 cm long, 2 to 3.5 cm wide, with many black, shiny seeds. Distributed throughout the South; most abundant in fertile fields, gardens, and barn lots.

### Toxicity

The toxic principles of this common hog lot and barnyard plant are the alkaloids atropine, hyoscyamine, and scopolamine. All parts of the plant are considered poisonous, whether green or dry. However, the seeds are particularly poisonous. Usually, this plant is not eaten except when other forage is unavailable. Cattle and swine are primarily affected, but horses, poultry, dogs, and humans have been affected. Cows can be poisoned by consuming 0.5 to 1 pound of the green plant. The toxin is not destroyed by drying. Plants may also take up nitrates.

### Symptoms

Early symptoms include a weak and rapid pulse and heartbeat, widely dilated eyes, and dryness of mouth and other mucous membranes. Animals may appear blind. Later symptoms include slow breathing, lowered temperature, convulsions, or coma.

After eating the plants, sheep may have abnormal leg movements, disturbed vision, and intense thirst; they may bite at imaginary objects in the air.

Pregnant sows consuming jimsonweed during their second and third months of gestation have produced deformed pigs. Some pigs may be born alive but exhibit varying degrees of flexed hips, stifles, and forelegs. The hocks may be overextended.

### Treatment

Nonspecific. Use tannic acid, gastric lavage, and respiratory stimulants. Destroy weeds in order to prevent problems.