Sicklepod *Senna obtusifolia*

Coarse annual herb, 0.4 to 0.5 m tall. Leaves alternate, pinnately compound with four to six obovate leaflets; largest leaflets 3 to 5 cm long. Flowers yellow, 1 to 1.5 cm long, in small axillary clusters. Pods splitting along two lines, sickle-shaped, 0.3 to 0.4 cm wide, 10 to 20 cm long, many seeded. Reportedly found throughout the South, commonly on sandy soils of Coastal Plain; most abundant in cultivated fields, roadsides, waste places, and open pinelands. [Coffee senna, left, and sicklepod, right. Inset: flower]

Coffee senna *Senna occidentalis*

Coarse herb very similar to *S. obtusifolia* but having mostly eight or more leaflets rather than four to six. Pods flattened whereas those on *S. obtusifolia* are nearly four-sided. Pods tend to be straighter and shorter than those of *S. obtusifolia.*

Toxicity

The toxic principles have not been clearly established. The seeds appear to exert their toxicity upon the skeletal muscles, kidney, and liver. The leaves and stem, whether green or dry, also contain toxin. Sicklepod is much more prevalent but somewhat less toxic than coffee senna. Animals can be poisoned by consuming the plant in the field, in green chop, in hay or if the seed is mixed with grain. Cattle are susceptible to the effects of these plants, and other animals are probably susceptible as well.

Symptoms

Diarrhea is usually the first symptom. Later, the animals go off feed, appear lethargic, and tremors occur in the hind legs, indicating muscle degeneration. As muscle degeneration progresses, the urine becomes dark and coffee colored. The animal becomes recumbent and is unable to rise. Death often occurs within 12 hours after the animal goes down. There is no fever.

Treatment

Once animals become recumbent, treatment is usually ineffective. Do not give selenium and Vitamin E injections because they will potentiate the disease. Vitamin E is the more important component in this potentiation.