

Plant Suspected as Poisonous to Stock

A PLANT suspected of being poisonous to stock, caper spurge (*Euphorbia lathyris*), was seen growing on a property in the Manawatu district, and the owner mentioned that a pet lamb had eaten some of the plant and died the following day.

The plant contains an acrid juice, and the seeds yield a purgative oil. *Euphorbia* is distinguished by its irritant action, and it may cause an inflamed mouth and stomach with intense diarrhoea and vomiting. If sufficient dose is taken it causes nerve disorder, delirium, unconsciousness, general collapse, and death. The post-mortem appearances are those of acute gastro-enteritis.

The accompanying illustrations show the plant in two stages:—(1) A young plant and one fully grown; (2) showing both types of leaves; and (3) a young plant and the top of a matured plant. Seed pods can be seen along the stems.



Fig. 1.—A young plant and one fully grown.



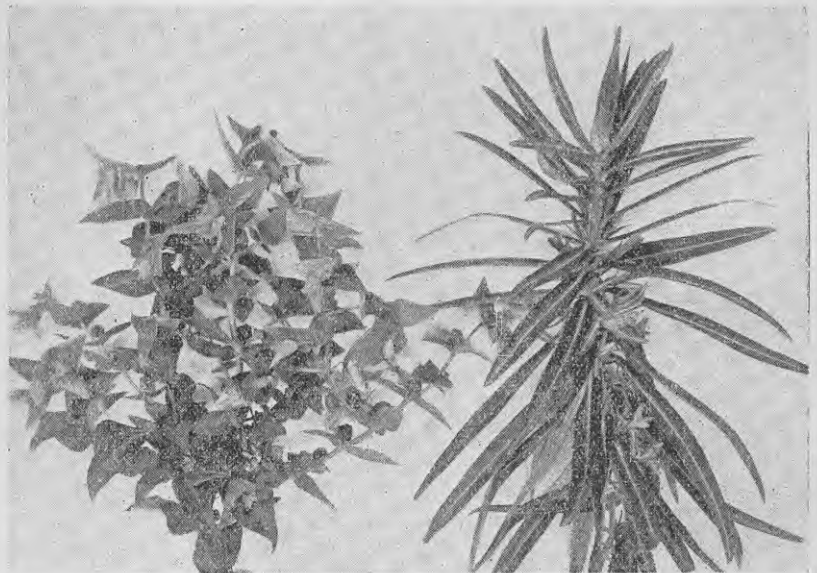
Fig. 2.—Showing both types of leaves.

When ripe, the pods are of a blackish-brown colour. The pods fall to the ground and open, releasing the seeds. When the young seedlings first

come through the ground they have the husk of the seed over them. Apparently, the seeds which fall do not germinate until the following year, but growth is fairly rapid, and the plant soon spreads. The height of a full-grown plant is about 2 ft. 6 in.

Having a short tap root, the plant is easily pulled and the spread may be prevented if it is not allowed to seed. The first or lower leaves are dark green, long and tapered. When approaching the mature stage the plant grows a light green leaf of triangular shape, which appears to be a peculiar characteristic of this plant. The plant apparently likes good soil, and does not appear to suffer if growing in the shade.

—H. A. BAYLEY, Inspector of Stock, Palmerston North.



A young plant and the top of a matured plant.

[H. Drake, photos.]

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