

Western Azalea

Rhododendron occidentale



Western Azalea is a deciduous shrub that can grow up to 16 feet tall. It is found in the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountain Ranges from Southern California to Southern Oregon. Western Azalea typically is found growing in wetland or riparian habitats, but not where roots would be submerged in water. When flowering the plant will have fragrant pink and white blossoms as seen in image to the left.

Avoiding Toxicity: When setting up targeted grazing units in forested ecosystems it is recommended to avoid grazing wetland areas that may have Western Azalea.

Poisonous Parts: Toxic compounds are found in all parts of the plant, including the nectar.

Signs of Toxicity: Sheep and goats that ingest Western Azalea exhibit lethargy, have colic, anorexia, profuse salivation, vomiting, shallow breathing, low heart rate and blood pressure, for up to 24 hours.

Treatment: Due to how fast clinical signs appear after ingestion of Western Azalea, if you suspect your goat or sheep has eaten this or another toxic plant, activated charcoal can be administered to the animal to help prevent the absorption of toxins and reduce the severity of poisoning; however, to be effective, this must be administered as quickly as possible following ingestion.

If your sheep or goat is vomiting it is important to protect them from a secondary infection caused by aspiration pneumonia. If your veterinarian is available, atropine may reverse the increased salivation and low heart rate.

Establish and maintain a veterinary client relationship. Work with your veterinarian to establish treatment for potential toxic plant ingestion, identify treatment solutions (e.g. activated charcoal, antibiotics) and have product on hand when grazing. Often targeted grazing in forest ecosystems will be in remote locations with limited cell phone service, thus it is important to recognize signs of plant toxicity and provide immediate treatment to prevent animal death.



Goat on targeted grazing project in Sierra Nevada Mountains in El Dorado County.



*Sample of activated charcoal powder for toxicity treatment. There are also activated charcoal gel products. *****NOT a product endorsement**, work with your veterinarian to identify treatment options prior to potential ingestion.*

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This guide is a product of a University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources 2021 HRDY Grant titled: Effectiveness and efficiency of targeted livestock grazing to reduce fuel loads in California's wildland urban interface.