

Tall Larkspur/Low Larkspur

Delphinium barbeyi and Delphinium occidentale

Common Names: Tall : Duncecap larkspur, Western larkspur

Low: Twolobe larkspur, Nuttall's larkspur

Species Affected: Cattle, Sheep, Equines

Toxin: Alkaloids

Description: Both Tall and Low Larkspur have blue to almost purple flowers with deeply lobed leaves. Wild geranium is sometimes mistaken for larkspur, but can be distinguished by the leaves. Wild geranium has shallow lobed leaves.

Growing Location and Timing :

Larkspur grow in areas with good soil moisture, usually in meadows, near streams, other areas with water sources, and on north facing slopes. Tall larkspur begins its growth when the snowpack begins melting. Low larkspur begins growth in the early spring prior to many other foraging plants. Low larkspur becomes dormant prior to the depletion of soil moisture.

Affects on Livestock:

Larkspur, because it is highly palatable, in the later growth stages, can cause sever loss in cattle. Loss is greater in areas where there is a large infestation in range. Losses do not occur very often in sheep or horses unless physical activity occurs after consumption of a large amount of larkspur. Larkspur toxicity is higher during early growth and becomes less toxic throughout the growing season.

Signs and Symptoms:

Signs of larkspur toxicity are weakness and staggering, muscle twitching, bloating, and irregular pulse. Other signs may be excessive salivation, and nausea or vomiting.

Preventative Measures:

Grazing during the early growth stages of larkspur will help reduce loss, because early growth larkspur is less palatable. Removing cattle from the area later in the growth season, and begin grazing after plant pods are present when toxicity is low. Sheep can be used to graze or trample larkspur before cattle are present.

