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St. John's wort - beetle parasites imported

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PIGS AND POISON PLANTS

CONTRIBUTED BY THE VETERINARY BRANCH

FARMERS have frequently asked Departmental officers whether pigs could be grazed with safety in paddocks carrying growths of toxic plants such as York Road Poison (*Gastrolobium calycinum*) or Box Poison (*Oxylobium parviflorum*).

Many people apparently believed that pigs were immune from, or highly resistant to, plant poisoning, but until recently, very little definite information was available.

It is now known, however, that pigs are markedly susceptible to York Road Poison, and this indicates that other species of *Gastrolobium* and *Oxylobium*, which contain the same active principle as York Road Poison, may also be highly toxic to pigs.

In feeding tests recently conducted at the Animal Health and Nutrition Laboratories a pig weighing approximately 30lb. was fed $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of York Road Poison mixed with its feed, all of which was consumed in half an hour.

This resulted in symptoms of vomiting which continued for three hours

and was followed by weakness, convulsions and loss of power of the limbs. Death occurred four hours after the plant had been consumed.

In a second experiment, a pig of the same weight was fed 1oz. of York Road Poison. Similar symptoms occurred after two hours but in this case the animal recovered.

Loss of appetite, weakness and diarrhoea persisted, however, for five days.

Although the susceptibility of the pig to plant poisoning was indicated, it is not known whether the animals would consume these plants readily while grazing. It is obvious, however, that they cannot be allowed access to them without risk.

ST. JOHN'S WORT

Beetle Parasites Imported

SOME hundreds of thousands of Chrysomelid beetles, which attack St. John's Wort, were recently forwarded to this State by air freight from the C.S.I.R.O. Division of Entomology, Canberra, and have been liberated at Greenbushes and Forestgrove.

The first West Australian releases of these beetles were made in November, 1947, when 300,000 of them were liberated at Holyoake, Mornington, Karri-dale and Arum Vale. In November,

1949, a further consignment of approximately 100,000 beetles was received and further liberations were made at Karri-dale.

The Chrysomelid beetles appear to have originated in the south of France, and in the Eastern States of Australia they have exercised a considerable degree of control over St. John's Wort. Since the initial introductions in this State, the beetles have spread considerably from the districts in which they were originally liberated and, as a result of their activities, a marked reduction of St. John's Wort has taken place in several areas.