

## Carex Pendula and sheep grazing

### Extracts from Nibblers online discussion group

A sheep owner dropped into our offices with a shopping bag full of *Carex pendula* for identification, which his sheep had just started eating and several had died. The vet had done an autopsy and found evidence of the sedge in the sheep, but no other clear evidence of cause of death. As far as the owner knew, there were no other poisonous plants in the field. I would be interested to know if anyone else has knowledge/experience of problems with this plant. It's not on the poisons website and as far as I know the other sedges are edible.

Thanks very much, Catherine Hosie

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My Hebridean sheep can reach a clump of *C. pendula* through a fence and readily graze it; they do not seem to suffer any ill effects but their consumption is limited to what they can reach (not more than 0.5 sq metres).

Richard (Small)

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I manage a 40ha wood with *Carex pendula* very dominant in parts of the ground flora, down in Essex. The fallow and muntjac deer largely avoid eating it, but I know of no data that shows it is poisonous. Most sedges are not.

Kind regards, Penny Anderson

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Our Ryeland and Icelandic sheep eat *Carex pendula* (and *divulsa*, *riparia* and *acutifolia*) though they prefer other more succulent fare first). Cattle also eat all these on our marshes, and several other species. I have never heard of any *Carex* being poisonous.

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Our horses eat *Carex pendula* keenly. We have also cut it and fed it to both cattle and horses (it's something of a weed in our garden, and nothing goes to waste). No ill effects.

The cattle also eat this and other large sedges for themselves when they can get them -- in fact, six of our steers did very well last winter on *C. acutiformis* and little else.

Can't speak for sheep, but it does seem very unlikely... Could there not have been something else more poisonous there?

On the other hand I do recall that the MAFF poisons book (can't remember the title) lists a case of poisoning (in, I think, Rumania) of cattle from *Carex vulpina*. Can't remember what they thought the active constituent was. This species is rare in the UK, and you'd be pushed to find a field with enough to poison anything.

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