

TWINCRESS TAINTS

Plants that Taint Milk

Milk can be tainted by certain crop plants and some pasture weeds. Often the substances that cause the taints are fat soluble and become concentrated in high fat products such as cream and butter. The taints are sometimes difficult to detect in the milk tank but show up later in the product.

In order to manage this problem the source of the taint needs to be identified and management tools implemented for effective control. Here are a number of crops and plants that cause problems.

- Twincreas
- Hedge mustard
- Watercress
- Buttercup
- Kale
- Wild garlic
- Chamomile
- Penny cress
- Wild onion
- Choumoellier
- Pennyroyal
- Wild turnip
- Clover
- Swedes
- Fennel
- Turnips

Badly fermented silage can also cause taints as can waste crops fed in times of gluts such as onion.s

Twincreas

Twincreas is one of the worst milk, cream and butter tainters in the world. Twincreas (*Coronopus didymus*) has a number of different names. These are: landcress, hogcress, scruff grass, lesser swinecress and carrot weed. Of all the weeds, twincreas is a major cause of milk downgrading as it gives the product a cress-like flavour.

Twincreas is a problem because:

- It is hard to detect in raw milk. Samples have to be heated to bring out the taint.
- It is difficult to remove from cream before processing.

Identification



Twincross is often confused with the widespread *Cotula australis* and several other species because the leaf shape is similar at the rosette stage. However, if you crush the leaves, twincross has the very distinctive strong mustard-like odour.

Twincross has long trailing stems which lie horizontally and grow up to 30 cm long. These are produced from a central crown. The lower stem leaves are stalked and very finely divided. The upper stem leaves are stalkless. The flowers are small and green, with petals white or absent. They are succeeded by double fruits from which the plant gets its name.

Habitat

Twincross is found on cultivated land, waste land and in pastures and gardens. In winter it continues to grow but the main problem period coincides with rapid pasture growth in spring. It doesn't normally thrive in a dense sward but often prefers an open pasture. It is found around gateways, on heavily pugged land, at old hay and silage stacks, on uncultivated ex-crop paddocks, along hedge lines, or on newly sown grass paddocks.

Control

If you are not sure if the weed is twincross (or any other feed tainting plant) have it identified.

Restrict the time the milking cows are on the feed to short periods. Moving cows off twincross infested pasture 4-5 hours before milking helps to reduce milk taint but does not eliminate it.

Spraying with selective herbicides can control the problem. Spray it with the correct chemical, watching withholding times for grazing check with your supplier on what to use.

Don't graze the sprayed pasture for three weeks. This is because the spray does not affect the chemical in the plant that causes the taint, and the plants will become more palatable to the cows.

To reduce the likelihood of weed growth, pasture density can be improved. Weeds generally grow where pasture is sparse.

If you think your milk may have been affected by twincrest, contact your dairy company and warn them.

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