

209. *LOLIUM TEMULENTUM* L. (POACEAE) — Darnel, Tares

Affords a nutritive feed for livestock, but animals should not be allowed to graze after the seeds set. Human deaths are attributed to eating the infected seed, ground up with wheat. Its use as chicken and pigeon feed is discouraged.³⁸ In Lebanon, where commonly believed to be the tares of the Bible, and where the danger of ergotism is well known, Lebanese hint that there is a mountain mystic cult which infuses the grass or soaks the seeds to extract the ergot. It is then used to induce religious ecstasy.

Regarded as anodyne, narcotic, POISON, the tare is a folk remedy for gangrene, headache, meningitis, neuralgia, rheumatism, and sciatica.³² It has quite a reputation for "cancer remedies". Moroccans use the decoction for hemorrhage and urinary incontinence.³ Used for cancer, eczema, indurations, kernels, "knots", putrid flesh, scirrhous (liver and spleen), tumors, and wens.⁴ According to homeopaths, it is used for St. Vitus' dance and idiocy, having been dropped by the allopaths. Lebanese women made a tea of the whole grass for children with colic. Adults used the ground seed for blood poisoning, leprosy, migraine, rheumatism, and toothache.³⁰ Seed meal has been used as a poultice in skin diseases and taken internally during menopause.³ The poultice is said to bring out splinters and broken bones.² Homeopathically used for pains of neuralgia and rheumatic pains, colic, epistaxis, and vertigo.³³

Dry seeds contain 10.9% protein, 2.6% fat, 56.2% carbohydrate, 39.0% fiber, and 11.9% ash.²¹ Grains contain loliine, perloline, (0.06%) temuline, $C_7H_{12}N_2O$ temulentine and temulentenic acid, starch, fructose, a saccharose galactoside, fatty oil with free fatty acids, and tannin. Herbage contains perloline, $C_{20}H_{38}N_2O_3$, circa 2.5% ash, of which 30 to 50% is acetic acid (33.56). Sap contains gelatinase and labenzyme.³³

Toxicity — Grains have caused giddiness, weakness, dizziness, dilated pupils, headache, confusion, trembling, vomiting, delirium, and death due to respiratory collapse (in animals and humans).⁵⁶

To the physician — *Hager's Handbook* suggests emetic or laxative as well as cardiac stimulants and analeptics.