

TO THE EDITOR

The family of the late Aldous Huxley has authorized me to prepare an edition of his letters for publication by Harper & Row of New York and by Chatto & Windus, Ltd., London. I should be most grateful if any owners of letters from Aldous Huxley would be kind enough to send them (or copies) to me for this purpose. Original letters would of course be treated with the greatest care, and after being copied would be returned immediately.

Sincerely yours,

Grover Smith
Associate Professor of English
Duke University
Durham, North Carolina

To the Editor:

Have any chemists looked for psychedelic substances in locoweed? The name is apparently taken from the Spanish "loco," meaning "mad" because of the behavior it induces in animals who have eaten the plants.

The plant is a member of the legume family and found chiefly in the Western United States. Several species have been identified as poisonous to horses, cattle, sheep and goats. The U. S. Department of Agriculture has listed the plant in Farmers' Bulletin No. 2106, August 1964 titled "16 Plants Poisonous to Livestock in the Western States" but the toxic chemical is not identified, and I have not been able to find any reference to chemical work with the plant.

The effect it has on animals is quite interesting. They apparently lose their sense of direction

and walk with an irregular gait; they are nervous, weak and withdraw from other animals. They may react violently when disturbed. "Locoed" horses seldom recover completely and are considered useless for saddle or work animals so are usually destroyed by their owner. Most animals suffer a weight loss and are therefore of no value for beef. Losses caused by abortion are frequently high when large amounts of the weed are ingested (could this be another ergot compound?).

Animals ordinarily will not eat the weed unless feed is scarce, but once they start eating it, they seem to acquire a taste for it termed the "loco habit" and will seek out the plants even when other forage is available. Symptoms of poisoning will usually appear within two to three weeks of continuous grazing on the plants.

I could not find any reference to the effect of locoweed on people. The USDA claims that locoweeds are poisonous during all stages of growth, and may be dangerous throughout the year. All parts of the plant are toxic, even after being stored in dry form for two to three years.

The following list is from the USDA Bulletin and is included for anyone who cares to search out more information about the plants.

| Common Name | Botanical Name | Distribution |
|-------------|---------------------|---|
| White loco | Oxytropis lambertii | Montana and North Dakota, south to Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas |

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|------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Purple, or woolly loco | Astragalus mollissimus | South Dakota to western Texas to New Mexico |
| Blue loco | A. lentiginosus | Eastern Washington, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, Nevada, and California |
| Bigbend loco | A. earlei | Western Texas and Southern New Mexico |
| Western loco | A. wootoni | Eastern Arizona, southern New Mexico, and southwestern Texas |

Sincerely,
Marjorie B. King
Fair Oaks, Calif.

(Editor's Note)

On the American desert are horses which eat the locoweed and some are driven mad by it; their vision is affected, they take enormous leaps to cross a tuft of grass or tumble blindly into rivers. The horses which have become thus addicted are shunned by the others and will never rejoin the herd. So it is with human beings: those who are conscious of another world, the world of the spirit, acquire an

outlook which distorts the values of ordinary life; they are consumed by the weed of non-attachment. Curiosity is their one excess and therefore they are recognized not by what they do, but by what they refrain from doing, like those Araphants or disciples of Buddha who were pledged to the "Nine Incapabilities." Thus they do not take life, they do not compete, they do not boast, they do not join groups of more than six, they do not condemn others; they are "abandoners of revels, mute, contemplative" who wait to be telephoned to, who neither speak in public, nor keep up with their friends, nor take revenge on their enemies. Self-knowledge has taught them to abandon hate and blame and envy in their lives, and they look sadder than they are. They seldom make positive assertions because they see, outlined against any statement, as a painter sees a complementary color, the image of its opposite. Most psychological questionnaires are designed to search out these moonlings and to secure their non-employment. They divine each other by a warm indifference for they know that they are not intended to forgather, but, like stumps of phosphorus in the world's wood, each to give forth his misleading radiance.

From: The Unquiet Grave
A Word Cycle.
by Palinurus (Cyril Connolly)
Viking Press, N. Y., 1945.,
P. 32-33.