

Weed Caused Sheep Deaths, Utah Governor Says

By ANTHONY RIPLEY

SALT LAKE CITY, Jan. 22 — Gov. Calvin L. Rampton blamed "a noxious weed

called halogeton" today for the death of 1,200 sheep in a remote hillside in western Utah.

He said the weed had been found in large quantities in the stomachs of sheep taken from the area and that further tests had shown chemical residues from the plant in the kidneys of the sheep.

In a news conference here this afternoon, the Governor and Dr. James S. Schoenfeld,

state veterinarian, said the weed could be tolerated by grazing animals if they had plenty of water, supplementary feed and a calcium-rich diet supplement.

Because of the killing of 6,400 sheep by nerve gas in March, 1968, at Skull Valley, near the Army's Dugway Proving Ground, it was feared that another nerve gas accident might have occurred.

Dr. Schoenfeld said his findings were confirmed by Dr.

Wayne Binns, director of the Poisonous Plant Research Laboratory of the United States

Department of Agriculture at Logan, Utah, and by a private veterinarian hired by the owners of the sheep.

Dead sheep littered the sparsely covered hills 15 miles southeast of Garrison, Utah. Their feed was mostly sagebrush, already nibbled down to a rounded crown in most places.

Halogeton, a small, soft plant sometimes called "loco weed," was found throughout the area.

Half of the herd of 2,500 was found dead yesterday morning by two sheep herders, Greg

Llewelyn, 63 years old, and Donald Ingram, 55. Another 50 sheep were reported ill this morning by Mr. Ingram.

Dr. Binns said halogeton, pronounced "hallow-gee-ten," began showing up in Nevada in 1938. He said it apparently came to the United States from the Soviet Union.

"Halogeton is now all over 11 Western states," he said, adding that the first livestock losses were reported in 1942.

Spray programs were begun in some states but have been ineffective because of the hardness of the seeds.