



Could harmful plants
be within *your* hungry
horse's reach?

Poisonous plants are common in pastures across the United States, but fortunately, a large percentage of this hazardous vegetation is far from appetizing, so the chances of your horse chowing down on it aren't through the roof. But every horse owner should know the warning signs and be vigilant in these months of lush vegetation. And once the spring grass has all been eaten up and the hotter, drier days of summer set in, your horse may be more likely to munch on undesirable plants due to boredom or increased hunger.

If your horse exhibits any of the major symptoms of poisoning, remove him from his pasture immediately and call your veterinarian. Poisoning shares symptoms with many other maladies, so a physical examination and blood tests will probably be needed for a definite diagnosis and subsequent treatment.

When you call your veterinarian, be ready to give as much information as possible—what symptoms your horse is exhibiting, what plant you suspect he's been exposed to and amount you think he's ingested.

The severity of the symptoms will depend not only on the soil, climate and growth stage of the plant, but also on your horse's age, weight and the amount of normal food he ingested before the poison entered his system. Depending on the quantity, toxins can prove fatal in a short amount of time (in a matter of hours), or over an extended period of time (days or weeks). In extreme cases, sudden death can occur.

Treatment varies, of course, depending on the plant ingested. A veterinarian will typically administer activated charcoal to a horse who's ingested the toxic bark of a black locust tree, as it will help prevent further absorption into the bloodstream. Poisoning from oleander might require laxatives to purge the remaining toxins from the

Be on the Lookout for Poisonous Plants

When was the last time you checked your horse's turnout for edible evils?

By SARA JACKSON

It's that time of year again. The sun is shining, which means you can finally turn your horse loose in his pasture or paddock after a long winter of being cooped up in his stall. But many owners, as they're unsnapping the lead from their horse's halter, are unaware of the potential dangers lurking in the fields beyond.

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Common Toxic Plants to Avoid

- › Black nightshade
- › Bracken fern
- › Cherry tree and relatives
- › Frosted grass
- › Horsetail
- › Horse chestnut tree and buckeyes
- › Oleander
- › Poison Hemlock
- › Ragwort
- › Red (soft) maple
- › Rhododendron
- › Oak tree and acorns
- › Yew tree
- › Yellow star thistle

10 Common Symptoms of Poisoning

1. Difficulty swallowing or breathing
2. Colic
3. Muscle spasms or tremors
4. Drooling
5. Irregular heartbeat
6. Weight loss
7. Diarrhea
8. High temperature
9. Swelling of the neck and throat
10. Lethargy and weakness

horse's stomach. Extreme cases of red maple poisoning, which can prove fatal or cause pregnant mares to abort, can require a blood transfusion, administration of fluids and large doses of Vitamin C.

Prevention is the best medicine. Take the time to research which toxic plants are indigenous to your area and inspect your fields as thoroughly as possible for the harmful vegetation. Regular mowing in the peak growing months can keep the toxic weeds at bay. You can also limit your horse's pasture or paddock time according to the time of year when the plants present are the most toxic.

Before turning your horse loose, make sure he's been well fed to reduce the temptation to eat those less than palatable poisons. And remember this rule of thumb: Allow one acre of pasture for every horse. **G**

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