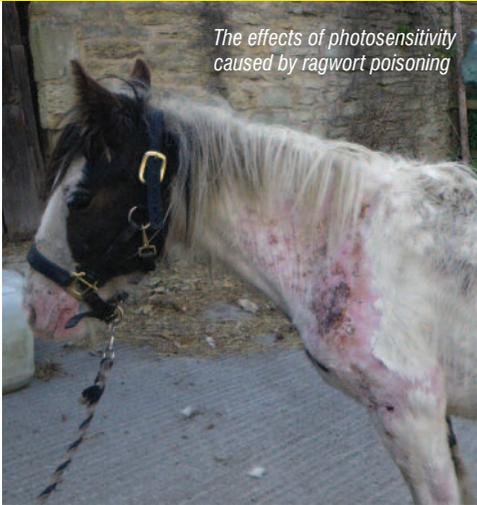


RAGWORT KILLS

Help us to control the spread of the yellow menace



The effects of photosensitivity caused by ragwort poisoning

- Defra produces a Code of Practice under the Ragwort Control Act 2003 that gives guidance on preventing the spread of ragwort.
- Live ragwort is bitter tasting, but dry ragwort is palatable. It can easily end up undetected in its dried state in bales of hay. Horses may spit out live ragwort while grazing, but these chewed-up ends will become dry and can be easily ingested by a fieldmate.
- By ignoring the plant, land owners put their own and other people's animals at risk. The plant may spread to other people's pasture and land used for hay crops.

The Facts

- Ragwort is specified as a harmful weed under the Weeds Act 1959.
- All parts of the plant, including seeds, contain highly toxic pyrrolizidine alkaloids. It is poisonous to horses, humans and livestock.
- One flowering plant can produce between 4,760 and 150,000 seeds. Each seed has a 70% chance of germinating.
- Ragwort is a biennial plant. In its first year, it forms small green rosettes. In its second year, it grows tall and produces yellow flowers with strong roots.

How does ragwort poison a horse?

- Ragwort toxins destroy the liver.
- The symptoms of liver damage only show up after two-thirds of the liver has been damaged. Treatment can be difficult and the damage is often irreversible.
- Symptoms can occur at any time between a few weeks to years after ingesting ragwort.
- Symptoms include weight loss, odd behaviour, loss of coordination and photosensitisation – the liver cannot filter out harmful substances in plants that accumulate in the skin and react with sunlight causing sores and blisters.

Keeping ragwort under control ! ! !

What can I do about it?

- You can prevent ragwort growth through good pasture management. Regularly clear droppings from pasture and ensure your land is not poached through overgrazing.
- Pulling up ragwort rosettes using a ragwort fork during the plant's first year of growth is the most effective and cheapest way of getting rid of the weed.



- Inspect land regularly. Keep a ragwort-pulling fork and a pair of gloves on hand. Take them with you when clearing droppings from pasture.
- Consult Defra's Code of Practice for Preventing the Spread of Ragwort for other methods of removal.
- Let your local community know the dangers of ragwort and how quickly it spreads. Write to your local paper or village magazine.

My neighbours won't clear their ragwort!

- Try to come up with a solution between yourselves. Give them some information, such as this leaflet, so they realise the dangers posed by ragwort.
- Organise a weeding party with your local community.
- If you cannot reach a solution, you can make a complaint to Natural England, who work on behalf of Defra, under the Weeds Act 1959. Download a complaint form from their website www.naturalengland.org.uk
- Inform the Highways Agency of ragwort growing at roadsides. National Rail is responsible for ragwort growing alongside railway lines, and your local council is responsible for ragwort growing on council-owned land.



Call the Redwings Welfare Line for more information on 01508 481008.

You can download Defra's Code of Practice for Preventing the Spread of Ragwort from their website.

Redwings Welfare Team

Redwings Horse Sanctuary, Hapton, Norwich NR15 1SP
Tel: 01508 481008 (9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday)
Email: info@redwings.co.uk

Redwings Horse Sanctuary

General Enquiries 01508 481000
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