

Horse News and Views



, Milkweed is one of those common nuisance weeds. It is a perennial, reproducing by seed and by horizontal spreading underground roots, which produce new leafy stems. The plant contains cardiac glycosides that are toxic to animals. Normally livestock find the plant distasteful but, during a drought, sheep have been poisoned. Milkweed is difficult to eliminate due to its ability to shut off the root system if herbicides are detected.

(Canadian Poisonous Plant Identification System

http://sis.agr.gc.ca/pls/pp/poison?p_x=px)

, Horses grazing on plants that have sharp awns, spines or burs can develop mouth and teeth problems. These can lead to excessive salivation with drooling or frothy saliva, or oral ulcers. Offending plants include burdock, foxtail barley, long-spined sandbur and raspberry canes. Foxtail barley has a sharp-pointed, bristly segment with forward pointing barbs. Since these barbs will only slide in one direction, they can easily become embedded in the tongue and gums where they act as a foreign body, stimulating excessive salivation and/or deep ulceration. Raspberry canes can cause similar lesions. This is seen occasionally when horses are fenced into woodlots with minimum access to more desirable forage.

, Brome grass is a tall, fine grass that grows readily on well-drained soils. It is difficult to plant because of its large, light, fluffy seed, which must be placed in the grain box of the seed drill. Brome grass produces a soft hay which is readily accepted by horses. It is well suited to horse diets with a Ca/P ratio of 1:1 - 1.2:1 and a protein level of 12-14% when harvested in early to mid bloom. It will continue to grow after the first cut if adequate moisture is available. This makes it a desirable grass in hay/pasture fields for horses.

For further information contact Dr. Bob Wright (519) 846-3412 or visit our website: <http://www.gov.on.ca/omaf/english/livestock>



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Horse News and Views is prepared by
Dr. Bob Wright, Veterinary Science,
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food,
Wellington Place, R.R. #1, Fergus, Ontario N1M 2W3
Telephone: 519-846-3412 Fax: 519-846-8101
Email: robert.wright@omaf.gov.on.ca

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