



PONY CLUB



ACHIEVEMENT BADGES

POISONOUS PLANTS

Advanced Achievement Badge

Learning Objectives

To know where some poisonous plants may grow and which are most likely to grow in your area. Further understanding of when horses and ponies eat poisonous plants and what some of the symptoms of poisoning may look like.

Syllabus

- 1 What are the nine plants that the Blue Cross state are most likely to poison horses.
- 2 Which of these plants have the group seen growing? Discuss the location of the plants.
- 3 Be able to describe more plants that are poisonous for horses and ponies
- 4 Understand that poisonous plants grow in differing soils and conditions.
- 5 Explain what symptoms a horse might exhibit if he has eaten a poisonous plant.
- 6 Know when horses and ponies are more likely to eat poisonous plants?
- 7 Local walkers and do gooders can be a problem by feeding grass cuttings, potatoes peeling etc to horses and ponies over the gate. What could you do which might stop them from doing this?

Teaching Ideas and Resources

- 1 With the group make a list of these plants.
Make a word search that includes these plants, allow members to do word search in class or take home.

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- 2** Ragwort, anywhere but worse in horse sick fields during the latter part of summer, (check groups understand horse sick fields). Ragwort is more obvious when flowering in its second year. Foxgloves usually near or in woods of neighbouring hedges, flowering in early summer. Deadly nightshade growing out from hedges. Buttercups in open fields in June, acorns on ground in autumn, can be blown in from neighbouring fields. Yew trees in hedges of gardens and churchyards. Rhododendron only grow on acid soil heathland and gardens. Sycamore trees in hedges, woodland, almost everywhere.
- 3** Each member to choose one or two plants, then research from their phones, the BHS website, or books about these plants and then describe their chosen plant to the group.

Lords and Ladies (cuckoo pint), Monkshood (Aconitum), Hemlock, Horsetail, Lupin, Potatoes, Ivy, Laurel, Privet.
- 4** As a group decide which soil and differing conditions there are, around where the horses and ponies that they ride are kept. (Possibly wet clay, limestone, acid, chalky, loamy, highland, moorland, rich arable etc.) Having decided what is their soil type and condition, write that on a card. Then research on telephones what poisonous plants are likely to grow in that area. Choose three different poisonous plants that are likely to grow in in three different soil types.
- 5** Colic, weight loss, diarrhoea, constipation, lack of co ordination, beating difficulties, problems swallowing, depression, loss of appetite.

Discuss the idea that whilst these symptoms may come from poisoning they can also be caused by other factors, ie. green runny droppings from new grass. At C+ the members will not have the experience to know whether a horse is poisoned or not so they must talk to an experienced horse owner or the vet. If any symptoms appear serious or are constant a vet should be called.
- 6** Divide the group into pairs. Ask each pair to think of when horses and ponies are likely to eat poisonous plants, share their findings. Answers should contain, when keep is poor/non-existent in winter or if spring is late, during drought when nothing else is growing, when fields are over stocked, when ponies are on restricted grazing to reduce their weight. When there is insufficient supplementary forage.
- 7** Ask the members to design a sign which they could hang on the gate to alert passers-by that they might be poisoning the horses and ponies by feeding them unsuitable snacks.

Amazon and the British Horse Society have signs that are available to buy.

Recommended Reading

The 14th Edition of the Manual of Horsemanship P66, The Pony Guide to Pasture Management if a copy is to be found, it is no longer for sale.

Questions

- 1 Name six of the plants most likely to poison horses or ponies.
- 2 What poisonous plants grow around your area?
- 3 Describe or draw three of these plants:
Lords and Ladies (cuckoo pint), Monkshood (Aconitum), Hemlock, Horsetail, Lupin, Potatoes, Ivy.
- 4 Describe the soil type where the horse that you ride are kept,(clay chalk, sand, limestone, loam), therefore what poisonous plants are more likely to grow there.
- 5 Name five symptoms that a horse or pony might show if it has eaten something that might be poisonous and what should you do?
- 6 Did the member learn any new times when a horse or pony was likely to eat poisonous plants, which was that time?
Excluding ragwort, sycamore and yew what months or seasons might other more unusual poisonous plants be a problem and could be eaten?
- 7 What could be included on a sign to restrict walkers from feeding the horses and ponies? If you do not wish to buy your own, where can signs be purchased?

Answers

- 1 Ragwort, foxglove, deadly nightshade, buttercups, acorns, yew, rhododendron, sycamore etc.
- 2 Any sensible answer
- 3 Plants correctly described.
- 4 Any sensible answer
- 5 Colic, weight loss, diarrhoea, constipation, lack of coordination, difficulty in chewing, problems swallowing, depression, loss of appetite.
Call the vet.
- 6 Any reasonable answer or when keep is poor/non-existent in winter or if spring is late, during drought when nothing else is growing, when fields are over stocked, when ponies are on restricted grazing to reduce their weight.

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Answer might include ivy in winter, potatoes and monkshood in autumn, laburnum in spring etc.

- 7** Signs could include details of plants not to be fed and the danger of death.

Amazon and the BHS.