



PONY CLUB



ACHIEVEMENT BADGES

POISONOUS PLANTS

Achievement Badge

Learning Objectives

Recognizing more poisonous plants and which of these are particularly dangerous.

Syllabus

- 1 Understand that whilst buttercups are poisonous, horses and ponies rarely eat them.
- 2 Recognise garden dangers, several poisonous plants are usually connected to a garden.
- 3 Realise that ragwort is a slow killer.
- 4 Understand that sycamore trees can be particularly dangerous.
- 5 Be able to identify nightshade and understand it is poisonous.
- 6 Know what season some poisonous plants occur.
- 7 Recognise bracken and know it is poisonous.
- 8 What steps can be taken to prevent ponies eating poisonous plants?

Teaching Ideas and Resources

- 1 Give members a drawing of a circle divided into four. Label the quarters spring, summer, autumn, winter. Ask members to colour yellow the season when buttercups are a problem. Dried buttercups in hay are not a problem.
- 2 Ask for suggestions from group of poisonous plants/trees that may come from gardens, growing over or through, the hedge or fence. Yew, laburnum, privet, laurel, foxgloves, rhododendron and ivy.
Have photos of these plants and ask group to share where they may have seen them.

- 3** Ponies will avoid ragwort because it tastes so horrible. The toxins in ragwort are stored by the body in the liver and cannot be got rid of. There are no symptoms until the fatal dose is reached, when it is too late to treat. Sometimes ragwort gets baled into the hay, so always look through hay when filling hay nets, or putting out piles of hay for a pony. Ragwort that is dead and baled into the hay does not taste bitter anymore, but it is still just as poisonous, so be on the lookout. Ideally have ragwort in hay as an example for members to see.
- 4** Sycamore trees grow freely. They are most dangerous in spring when the seedlings are growing and autumn when the seedlings are dropping off the tree. The helicopter seeds can fly a long way from the actual tree. On the diagram which was coloured in for buttercups draw little green sycamore seedlings in the spring quarter and helicopter seeds in the autumn quarter. Ideally show members growing trees.
- 5** Woody/Deadly/Black Nightshade – this is often found rambling through a hedge or sometimes along the ground.
Show members diagrams of these plants, allow them to colour them
- 6** On the previous circle diagram fill in the names, (or drawings), of the poisonous plants studied, into the correct quarter to show when the plants are likely to be a problem.
- 7** Whilst ponies will eat bracken a large amount needs to be eaten over a length of time to cause a problem.
- 8** Make a handout with two columns.
Column one: Buttercups, yew, privet, ragwort, acorns, sycamore seeds, sycamore seedlings, laburnum, deadly nightshade, rhododendron and ivy, laurel, bracken.
Column two: fence off, feed plenty of hay so pony not hungry, pull up, collect up, dig up or fence off.
Ask members to draw a line from the plants in first column to how they would deal with the plants in column two.

Recommended Reading

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

Questions

- 1** Are buttercups dangerous to ponies?
- 2** Name four garden plants that may grow through or be thrown over from a neighbouring garden.

- 3** What will you do if you find a ragwort in the hay?
- 4** Identify a sycamore tree, and the helicopter seeds and seedlings. Ideally in a field or hedge row.
- 5** Where might you find nightshade plants?
- 6** Name two poisonous plants that be found in summer, two in autumn and one in winter.
- 7** Where might bracken be found and how do you recognise it?
- 8** Are there things we can do to reduce the likelihood of our horses and ponies having access to poisonous plants?

Answers

- 1** Possibly, but unless ponies are really hungry they do not eat them.
- 2** Yew, laburnum, privet, laurel, foxgloves, rhododendron and ivy.
- 3** Ideally this hay should not be used to feed ponies. If there is no other option search every slab carefully for the dried up ragwort and then burn it.
- 4** Correct identification made.
- 5** Generally in a hedge or on the ground near a hedge.
- 6** Summer, any of the plants previously mentioned.
Autumn acorns, ragwort.
Winter yew, ivy.
- 7** On ground that is not cultivated, woods, hill or moorland. In summer green and about 30cms high, in autumn brown and dying.
- 8** Check grazing paddocks every day for poisonous plants.
Check the hay for poisonous plants.
Check that garden clippings, lawn mowings and other plants have not been thrown into your pony's field.