

Toxic Plant Alert – White Snakeroot



Description:

White Snakeroot is an erect, branched herb that is usually 1 to 5 feet tall. It has slender, round stems and branches bearing pointed, oval, oppositely placed leaves. The leaves are 3 to 5 inches long and are sharply toothed on the margins. Each leaf has 3 main veins that show prominently on the underside. In late summer, numerous small heads of minute flowers appear at the top of the stem and ends at its branches. The leaves do resemble those of the nettle. White Snakeroot is found along wooded areas and around streams in wooded pastures in the Midwest. Due to the early spring, these plants are sprouting up early and are taller than the grasses and are consumed by horses unknowingly while grazing.

Clinical Signs:

The onset of clinical signs of white snakeroot poisoning in horses is within 2 days to 3 weeks after initial ingestion. The major effects are related to congestive heart failure. Horses may stand with legs wide apart, sweating, muscle tremors, stumbling in the rear legs when the horses are turned. Severe depression, bloody urine, excessive salivation, inability to swallow and/or choking may also occur. They may exhibit a jugular pulse and a rapid heart rate. Cardiac arrhythmias are often present.

****If you find white snakeroot in your pasture please remove any animals on that pasture until you can rid the area of the plant. The best way to control them is by pulling them out by the roots after a hard rain while the ground is soft. The best way to dispose of the pulled plants is by burning them.**