



What Not To EAT

Unfortunately with the weather this summer there is very little grass cover making horses eating toxic substances more likely.

Hopefully this article will help highlight what to look out for and be aware of, but, if you are concerned your horse is showing signs of poisoning please **call us immediately.**

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Sycamore: If possible cut down your sycamore trees if there are any in your pasture. Unfortunately, the seeds can travel long distances on the wind so even if you think there are none around it is important to regularly check your fields.

It is really important you clear the sycamore seeds and sycamore leaves from your grazing fields or fence off where they are. If you are not able to you must ensure there is enough forage for the horses in the field preferably providing adlib hay on top of the grazing grass to try and prevent the horses' eating the seeds.



Eating sycamore seeds, leaves or seedlings can cause severe muscle disease that is often fatal in horses.

Symptoms include:

- ◆ Muscle trembling
- ◆ Brown or dark red urine
- ◆ Weakness - struggle to stand/walk or breath
- ◆ Colic signs but still eating
- ◆ Depressed- may hang their heads

Acorns: As we go into autumn and everything starts to fall from the trees, it's worth being aware of some of the dangers to your horse, including acorns.

The highest risk is following strong winds when many of the green acorns drop, eating large numbers of acorns can cause poisoning.

It's not common but the main risk is damage to the kidneys. The more acorns the horse eats the higher the risk but some horses are more sensitive than others.



Symptoms include:

- ◆ Inappetence
- ◆ Colic like signs
- ◆ Diarrhoea followed by constipation

It can be fatal and there is no specific treatment (although with supportive treatment many horses are fine) so avoidance is the best strategy.

Fence off/ avoid pasture around Oak trees or if this is impossible, feed additional forage if the pasture is poor (to reduce the chance of horses foraging around the trees).



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Ragwort: With distinctive yellow flowers (rosettes) a little like daisies with yellow petals, they flower May to October.

It is a legal requirement to remove the Ragwort on your land under the Ragwort Control Act 2003 and the Weeds Act 1959.

It is important to ensure you pull the ragwort up with the roots still attached. Ragwort forks can help you do this. When picking or handling ragwort please make sure you wear gloves. Long term contact with it can make you ill as well! Once you have removed it from your field how you dispose of it is also essential. You need to make sure you keep it away from your horses and its not going to be lying around . If you can do so safely it is ideal to burn the ragwort but remember to do any fires a significant distance from your stables or any wooden buildings. Otherwise please throw the ragwort away. Any cut plants that are left still pose a big risk to your horse.

It is important whilst there is any ragwort in the field to ensure your horse has plenty of grazing or hay available to reduce the risk of temptation before you are able to remove the ragwort.

You can spray your fields with weedkiller to prevent it growing in the autumn and the spring but any fields sprayed then have to be rested for 4-6 weeks. It is advisable to speak to companies providing this service before undertaking it to ensure you are using the correct products at the correct time of the year.

Your horse can develop liver failure a few weeks to several months after ingestion. This condition is potentially fatal hence it is so important it is recognised.

Symptoms include:

- ◆ Lethargy
- ◆ Icterus— (yellow) mucous membranes
- ◆ Photosensation— looks like sunburn
- ◆ Loss of appetite
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ Diarrhoea
- ◆ Weight loss
- ◆ Head Pressing
- ◆ Apparent blindness
- ◆ Convulsions



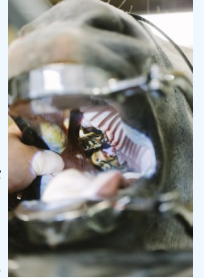
On the subject of what not to eat, how about eating in general?

Is your horse' mouth fit for winter!

The old expression “no teeth—no horse” couldn't be truer.

Oral health is essential to the general health of all horses, ponies and donkeys.

Horses have evolved to hide pain and as a consequence, often show little or no symptoms of even quite severe dental problems. Many horses have undiagnosed dental pathology which can develop into painful conditions if left. It is advisable to have an annual oral examination and preparing for winter is the perfect time to ensure all well in your horse's mouth.



Signs a horse might show if they have a dental condition include:

- ◆ Drop bits of food
- ◆ Quidding (Balling food)
- ◆ Weight loss
- ◆ Might be difficult to bend or resistant to the bit
- ◆ Off food
- ◆ Lumps on the jaw
- ◆ Your horse may not want to be tacked up
- ◆ Bad breath
- ◆ Eating slowly
- ◆ Packing food in their cheeks
- ◆ Poorly digested food in their faeces



- ◆ Or they may not show any signs at all and may not alert you to their discomfort!