



Noxious/Invasive Species

Hogwort

(Poisonous Plant)

Illinois

Plants found in hay and grain



Description

Croton capitatus Michx.: Hogwort is an erect, stout, sparingly branched annual that grows up to 4 feet tall. The stem and the alternately arranged, narrowly oblong leaves are clothed with white, woolly hairs. The leaf margins lack teeth. The flowers are crowded at the ends of the branches, and are small, inconspicuous, and clothed with hairs. Some flowers have five sepals, five petals, and 10 to 14 stamens; others lack petals, have 5 to 10 sepals, and a single ovary with three styles that are divided 2 or 3 times so that there are 12 to 24 stigmas. Fruits produced from these flowers are capsules containing three seeds.

Occurrence

Hogwort is a plant of dry, sand, gravelly, or stony soil in orchards, fallow fields, roadsides, and railroad trackways. It ranges from Ohio to Indiana and Kansas, south to Florida and Texas.

Conditions of Poisoning

Hogwort has such a disagreeable taste that most animals will not eat it. For this reason, there are only a few reported cases of poisoning that can be attributed to browsing. Since the plant sometimes grows abundantly in pastures, however, it is sometimes cut with hay, and the hay can poison animals that eat it.

Control

Do not cut hay from pastures and fields in which hogwort plants are numerous. Destroy the plant in all places where animals graze.

Toxic Principles

Hogwort is believed to contain croton oil. This oil, besides being a powerful cathartic, can blister and irritate the skin. Pure croton oil is reportedly so poisonous that 10 drops of it will kill a dog.

Clinical Signs

Animals with skin irritations may be suffering from contact with hogwort. When animals eat hay that is infested with hogwort, they become nervous, show evidence of colic, and have diarrhea. Fatal poisoning by hogwort is rare.

Treatment

Treatment is largely directed toward easing the discomfort of the affected animal. Bland oils and sedatives are given when poisoning occurs from eating the plant.

References

Evers, Robert A., and Roger P. Link. *Poisonous Plants of the Midwest and Their Effects on Livestock*, 1972. Special Publication 24, College of Agriculture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

December 2006



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