**Equisetum arvense**

**Common name:**
Horsetail, Scouring rush,

**Palatability to Livestock:**
Seldom eaten.

**Toxicity to Goats:**
Low risk.

**Toxicity to Other Species:**
- Sheep and cattle, eating fresh material.
- Horses, from hay contamination.

**Poisonous Principle:**
- Alkaloids, including equisitine, which destroys thiamine, causing a Vitamin B1 deficiency.

**Effects:**
*Signs and symptoms:*
- Weakness of the hind quarters,
- Lack of coordination,
- Excitability, trembling,
- Increased pulse rate.
- Convulsions, coma and death.

*Health and Production Problems:*
- Loss of condition and livestock deaths.
- Selectively accumulates heavy metals, therefore has a potential as an “indicator” plant.
- Often contain silica.

**Treatment:**
Try large doses of Vitamin B1 (thiamine).

**Integrated Control Strategy:**
- Biological control agents are being tested.
- Try 2,4-D, or MCPA.
- A declared “Noxious” weed in all states, and must be notified to your local Council.

**Comments:**
- A garden plant. Very difficult to control.
Imported by nurseries, until prohibited.

. A perennial, rough, erect, very primitive, non-flowering plant, with ribbed stems, up to 60cms. Reproduces by spores, and tuber bearing creeping rhizomes.
. Leaves usually green, often dark brown, in whorls, of 6 – 18, fused lengthwise to form a sheath around the stem.
. Stems usually die back to the rhizomes each year. Fertile and sterile stems both jointed (like she-oak), grooved and hollow.
. Fertile stems appear in spring before sterile stems, 30cms x 5mm and die after shedding spores; pale brown, whitish or pinkish-brown, smaller, and unbranched.
. Sterile stems are green, to 80cms x 5mm, first appearing in late spring, usually with rings of spreading branches from the upper joints.
. Underground rhizome, deep growing, to several metres, long running hairy, dark brown to black, roots can reach 1m below soil surface.
. Not a native of Australia. It is a primitive survivor from the carboniferous epoch.
. Widespread in the world.
. Found in Queensland, NSW. Tasmania and Victoria.
. Dust-like green-yellow spores produced in cones, 10–4- mm long, at ends of fertile stalks.
. This plant encourages ripening of fruit.

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**References:**