

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 equisitrine, 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.



Picture: *Equisetum arvense* CRC WW 8

References;

- . Blood. Environmental Weeds for SE Australia. CRC weed Management Systems. 2003.
- . Parsons and Cuthbertson. Noxious Weeds. 2001
- . Woodward. An Australian Herbal. 1996.