Plants Causing Irritation

Some plant compounds will irritate the digestive tract, mouth or skin if consumed. Death seldom results from the consumption of these plants. Plants are not generally palatable and are generally avoided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Pasture Plants Causing Irritation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Coryza canadensis</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Euphorbia esula</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Juniperus occidentalis</em></td>
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<td><em>Ranunculus</em> spp.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Vicia villosa</em></td>
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</tbody>
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Provided by Karin Neff, Andy Hulting, Mylen Bohle and David Hannaway
Horseweed/Fleabane, *Conyza canadensis*

**Identification:** One- to five-foot winter or summer annual. Unbranched lower stems with spatulate, coarsely toothed leaves and upper, branching stems with abundant alternate bristly linear leaves. Numerous flowers in terminal clusters on branch ends. Flowers are small with white ray flowers and yellow disk flowers.

**Habitat:** Pastures, meadows, cultivated fields, roadsides and waste areas.

**Animals Affected:** Horses

**Toxin Family:** Herpene (a terpine) in leaves and flowers

**Other:** Chemical irritates horse’s nostrils. Seldom eaten.

Provided by Karin Neff, Andy Hulting, Mylen Bohle and David Hannaway
Leafy Spurge, *Euphorbia esula*

**Identification:** Branched perennial with an extensive root system. Narrow, alternate leaves. Milky sap in stem and leaves. Flowers in terminal clusters with conspicuous yellow-green bracts and seed in capsule.

**Habitat:** Range and pasture

**Animals Affected:** Cattle. Sheep and goats unaffected and can be used for control.

**Toxin Family:** Unknown, but contained in sap.

**Other:** Irritants in sap can cause excessive salivation and diarrhea. Generally avoided.
Western Juniper, *Juniperus occidentalis*

**Identification:** Aromatic tree with scale-like leaves. Large, spreading branches and shredding bark. Male and female cones at branch tips: pollen cones brown and scaly, seed cones berrylike and bluish-purple at maturity, covered with whitish film.

**Habitat:** Mountain slopes, sagebrush communities

**Animals Affected:** Most livestock

**Toxin Family:** Terpenes

**Other:** Can cause irritation. Generally avoided.

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Buttercups, *Ranunculus* spp.

**Identification:** Various: generally erect stems, deeply lobed leaves and 5-petaled yellow flowers.

**Habitat:** Pastures, especially wet areas

**Animals Affected:** sheep, cattle

**Toxin Family:** Protoanemonin from Ranunculin glycoside, released when plant is chewed.

**Other:** Protoanemonin irritates the mouth, causes excessive salivation and intestinal irritation which can result in diarrhea. Can be fatal if eaten in excessive quantities. Causes sharp drop in milk production, and blistered lips. Creeping buttercup is toxic to cattle. Bur Buttercup is highly toxic to sheep. Toxin lost in dried forage. Plants not highly palatable: generally avoided.
Hairy or Wooly Vetch, *Vicia villosa*

**Identification:** Hairy, creeping annual. Can grow four to six feet in length. Compound leaves with 10-20 leaflets that are narrowly-lancolate, with terminal branched tendrils. 2-toned flowers in 1-sided dense clusters, usually red to purple, 20-60 per spike. Fruit a hairless pod containing several hard seeds.

**Habitat:** Roadsides, open forests, disturbed areas, idle land

**Animals Affected:** Cattle and occasionally horses

**Toxin Family:** Unknown

**Other:** Causes sporadic poisoning of adult cattle and occasionally horses. Symptoms include dermatitis causing itchy legions, weight loss, conjunctivitis (pink-eye) and diarrhea. Abortion and red urine have also been noted.

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