

Houndstongue Fact Sheet

Cynoglossum officinale

Boraginaceae Family



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Distinguishing Features:

- ❶ **Flowers:** Reddish-purple or occasionally white, with five petals.
- ❷ **Seeds:** Reproduces by seed. Each plant can produce up to 2,000 seeds which remain viable for up to 3 years.
- ❸ **Leaves:** Rough hairy leaves that are up to 12 inches long and 3 inches wide.
- ❹ **Flowering Time:** Early summer.
- ❺ **Life cycle/ other:** Biennial.

Impacts:

- Invades areas that have more than 10% bare ground and prefers gravelly alkaline soils. Does not compete well with native plants.
- The seed pods (nutlets) are covered with hooked spines and provide a mechanism for dispersal on clothing and fur.
- Houndstongue contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids which are highly toxic to horses. However, animals rarely eat it unless it is dried and mixed with hay.

Control:

- For small infestations, houndstongue can be dug-up or hand-pulled if soil conditions permit. Hand pulling may be difficult as the taproot is strong and grows deep into the soil.
- For plants that have already gone to seed, clip and bag the stalks and nutlets. Plants will not regrow the following year as each plant dies following seed production.
- For larger infestations, Escort (Metsulfuron) at 1 to 2 ounces per acre (oz/A) is very effective when applied throughout the growing season. For first-year rosettes, 2,4-D applied at 2 pints/acre from late May to mid-June is effective. Second-year plants are much less susceptible to 2,4-D.
- Prevent seed spread! Beware to remove all seeds from clothing, shoes, shoelaces, etc.



USDA PLANTS Database, USDA NRCS PLANTS Database, Bugwood.org

*Please visit our website for references sourcing this information.



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