Houndstongue Fact Sheet

*Cynoglossum officinale*

**Boraginaceae Family**

**Distinguishing Features:**

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

*Please visit our website for references sourcing this information.*