

Houndstongue

Common names: rats and mice & dog bur
(*Cynoglossum officinale*)

Currently in Montana, noxious weed infest about 8.2 million acres. Many of these state listed noxious weeds were brought to America as ornamentals for gardens, medicinal purposes, by accident in discarded soil from a ship's ballast, or unintentionally in bags of seed brought from other parts of the world. Whatever the cause of introduction non-native plant species have found their way onto Montana's state listed noxious weed list.

Houndstongue is native to western Asia and eastern Europe. It was introduced into the United States as a medicinal and was used as a folk remedy for ailments including acne, eczema and for fevers.

Houndstongue inhabits pastures, meadows, roadsides, disturbed sites and occurs in 44 out of the 56 counties in Montana.

If ingested by livestock, houndstongue is fatal because it produces an alkaloid that causes loss of production of liver cells. Even if eaten in dried hay, houndstongue remains toxic. Sheep are resistant to the effects of the alkaloid, cattle and horses are more susceptible.

The first year of growth, houndstongue forms a deep tap root that is thick and black and a basal rosette. The second year, a flowering stem is formed; flowers bloom, seeds are set and then the plant dies.

'Houndstongue' was coined because the rosette leaves that are formed are broad and oblong in shape; resembling a dog's tongue. The leaves of houndstongue can be up to 12" in length and 3" in width. Leaves and stems are covered entirely in soft white hairs and leaves are soft to the touch. A houndstongue plant can grow up to 4 feet in height.

The flowers of houndstongue are reddish-purple in color, have five petals, and bloom from June to July. Flowers produce four teardrop shaped nutlets that are 1/3" in length and are covered with tiny barbs that can attach to clothing, animal fur, and even vehicles! Houndstongue only reproduces through seeds; a single plant can produce up to 2,000 seeds!

Please take a few moments to learn about noxious weeds. If noxious weeds are not currently a problem in your area, they may be in the near future. For more information about Montana's state listed noxious weeds, regulated plants, or weed species listed on your county weed list, please contact your local county weed district (can list weed district name here... ex: Lewis & Clark County Weed District) at _(406)_(Phone number)_. Or you can contact the Montana Department of Agriculture at (406) 444-5600.