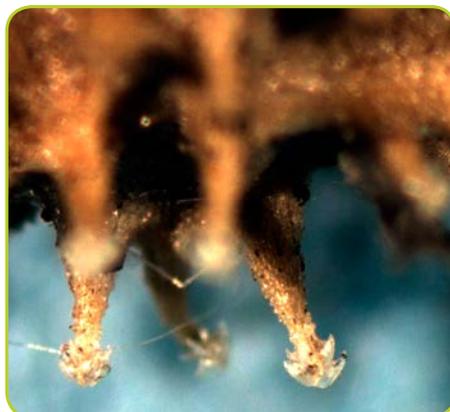


HOUNDSTONGUE

(*Cynoglossum officinale* L.)



HOUNDSTONGUE

State Noxious Weed List: **No.**

Houndstongue is a biennial poisonous herb that is native to Eurasia. The plant is a member of the Boraginaceae family, which includes more commonly known plants such as Virginia Bluebells, Forget-Me-Nots and the fiddlenecks. Houndstongue commonly is found in disturbed areas, including roadsides, trails, and in pasture and woodlands following soil disturbance or overgrazing.

Identification and growth form:

Houndstongue is a biennial that forms a rosette the first year of growth and bolts and flowers the second season. The plant only reproduces from seed, but can spread great distances because the barbs on the nutlets cling to clothing, machinery and animals. The leaves are oblong, very pubescent and rough, which resembles a hound's tongue. Plants bolt during early summer, the second year of growth, to a height of 1 to 4 feet and flower in mid-June. The flowers are small, arranged in clusters and not showy. Flower color ranges from red to burgundy. Each flower produces three to four nutlets, which are flat and tear-drop shaped with a very hard seed coat and numerous barbs. Plants generally are found along trails and roadsides, on the edge of wooded areas and in disturbed habitats. Infestations often establish near areas where cattle and other livestock rub against something such as fence posts and trees or shrubs.

Why is this plant a concern?

Houndstongue tends to be a nuisance weed rather than a noxious plant unless infestations grow to become large patches. The nutlets often become imbedded in the wool or hair of livestock, which can cause a loss of value of the wool and/or increase costs to remove the burs. Eye damage can occur if burs become embedded in the eye or eyelids. The burs can be problematic for hikers, hunters and fishermen and also to their pets.

Houndstongue contains alkaloids that are especially toxic to cattle and horses. The plant is rarely eaten in the green

state; however, animals will eat the dried plant in hay. Sheep are more resistant to the pyrrolizidine alkaloids than other livestock, while horses, especially when confined to small areas infested with houndstongue, are more likely to ingest toxic levels. Fatal liver disease in horses occurred following two weeks of feeding hay with as little as 6 percent houndstongue.

How do I control this plant?

Prevention is the best method to keep houndstongue from invading North Dakota. Use only certified weed seed-free hay and eradicate new infestations before the plant can spread.

Chemical. Escort (metsulfuron) is very effective for controlling houndstongue and can be applied throughout the growing season. First-year houndstongue rosettes are easily controlled with 2,4-D applied from late May to mid-June. Second-year plants are much less susceptible to 2,4-D. Plateau (imazapic) at high rates will control houndstongue both pre- and post-emergence, but grass injury, especially to the cool season species is likely when Plateau is applied at the maximum rate.

Biological. A root weevil, *Mogulones crucifer*, has been released for control of houndstongue in Canada. The insect has become well-established in Alberta and has greatly reduced the houndstongue infestation in that province. However, this biological control agent has not been approved for release in the U.S. and interstate movement is not allowed. Several other insects are being evaluated for biological control of houndstongue, including a seed weevil (*M. borraginis*), a stem weevil (*M. trisignatus*) and a root fly (*Cheilosia pasquorum*); however, initial results are not nearly as promising as those of the root weevil.