



Alkali Creek Road, PO BOX 385 Billings, Montana 59103

Sep/Oct 2007



Fall has arrived...



2007 BOARD MEMBERS

President

Pat Cole 962-3002

1st Vice President (Membership)

Sue Malmstrom 373-6736 suem@tbems.com

2nd Vice President (Horse Activities)

O-Mok-See

James Sorlie 259-9995 jimsorlie@gmail.com

Horse Show

Joey Henry 245-2681 henryjoey@hotmail.com

3rd Vice President (Social Activities)

Nancy Bjelland 373-0045 Nancy_Bjelland@blm.gov

Corresponding Secretary

Polly Namen 633-9400 barlazyp@earthlink.net

Recording Secretary

Teri Bakken 860-5380 tbakken@bresnan.net

Treasurer

Doris Gillespie 656-9977

3 Year Director

Jimmie Jimison 373-5725 mykidcorral@msn.com

2 Year Director

Sandie Green 373-9029 sam7sell@yahoo.com

1 Year Director

Sue Schwend 670-8028

Stirrup Editor

Polly Namen 633-9400 barlazyp@earthlink.net

Club Website www.billingsaddleclub.org (for access to member restricted area, enter "member" and "1515")

The next Board meeting is November 1st @ 6pm at the clubhouse. All BSC members are always welcome.

CALENDAR FOR 2007

November	1	6 pm	Board Meeting BSC
	18	5 pm	Annual Meeting-election of officers & year-end awards
December	6	6 pm	Board Meeting TBA

NEW MEMBER APPLICATIONS:

Tanya & David Punt 1403 Black Eagle Trail Billings, MT 59107 697-1332 Children: Marleigh(7) & Tatiana(5)

NEW BSC logo on apparel

Anyone interested in purchasing apparel with a terrific new (embroidered) logo can go to Creative Monogram at 122 N 30th in Billings. Select whatever item(s) you want embroidered, and place your own order.

All those going to State O-Mok-See are encouraged to wear a BSC shirt! (Remember - if you plan on competing in it, it must be a western shirt.)

Creative Monogram donated the set up fee, **so be sure to thank them!**

A huge **THANK YOU** goes out to **Larry Schwend** for mowing and **Jerry Gran's family** for clean up efforts. We appreciate all that you do for our club!

The Billings Saddle Club wishes Steven Sorlie the best of luck in his new endeavors. Steven left for the military in September. We all remember how Steven was always at the O-Mok-See's early, helping to set up, etc., in addition to competing regularly. Steven, **thank you** for all your efforts and involvement in BSC over the years, and we wish you the best of luck in this next big step in your life. We are proud of you and will be thinking of you and praying for you.

TRAILER SAFETY We found a terrific website that provides information on trailer safety and buying tips. When you have a spare minute, check out <http://www.equispirit.com/into/faq/htm> for some great reminders and ideas. You can never be too informed!

GET WELL WISHES are in order for Phyllis Brosz. We are all sending positive, healing thoughts your way. Hope to see you back at it soon!

Some of the projects that we need members to volunteer/complete: (can YOU help??)

Change arena lights to new fixtures

Lay water line down to the arena

Repair/replace clubhouse wall damaged by erosion

New roof on the clubhouse



Classified Advertisements



If you have (or someone you know has) horses, tack, trucks, trailers or any other horse related equipment **for sale** (or **wanted** items) that would interest our membership, contact the STIRRUP editor (Polly Namen 633-9400) with your ad information.

FOR SALE: See Curt & Sue Schwend for **beautiful, handmade walking sticks and lamps** 670-8028

FOR SALE: Marlene Eddleman McRae **BARREL SADDLE**, 14.5" seat, \$850, in GREAT condition! Call Pat Loge @ 322-5761

FOR SALE: 6 year old barrel, pole, or Omoksee mare. This horse is very versatile. Great horse for any level of rider. 406-690-1076

FOR SALE: Jamestown J1000B Pellet Insert, Metallic Brown; 3 T of Linguistics Wood Pellets; and Cougar Ash Vacuum - \$1400 OBO - Sue Malmstrom 373-6736

FOR SALE: **12 yr. old gelding for sale**, good using horse, gentle, 16 hands, "No Brakes Now" breeding. Has been barrel raced, worked cows, rode in hills, and pleasure riding. Granddaughter's horse. Priced at \$6,500 and worth it. Call Diane Bomar at 259-8068 or email diane bomar@cs.com



"THE GRAND ESSENTIALS TO HAPPINESS IN THIS LIFE ARE SOMETHING TO DO, SOMETHING TO LOVE AND SOMETHING TO HOPE FOR."

- Joseph Addison

MEETING MINUTES – September Board Meeting

The Billings Saddle Club Board Meeting was called to order on by Pat Cole September 20, 2007.

Present: Sue Malmstrom, Sue Schwend, Nancy Bjelland, Pat Cole, Jimmie Jimison, Sandie Green, Doris Gillespie, Polly Namen, Jim Sorlie, and Teri Bakken.

Minutes: The August 2, 2007 minutes were read. Sue Malmstrom motioned to accept the minutes and Sue Schwend seconded. The board approved.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's report was reviewed. Sue Schwend motioned to accept the report and Teri seconded. The board approved.

Correspondence: The club received a thank you note from Riley Bandt. The club sponsored the 2 barrel flag race at National for the under 8 age group.

Stirrup: No report.

Horse Activities: The board discussed buckles, buckle designs, and other year-end awards. No decisions were made.

The Memorial O-Mok-See will be September 23. There will be 6 games, no novice class. The club will supply chicken, the rest is pot luck. A reminder email will be sent to all members.

The board discussed horse show entry deadlines. A deadline (time of day) will be established for entries in order to properly evaluate whether a show should be cancelled for lack of participants.

Jim will get the ribbons from Joey so they can be distributed during the last O-Mok-See.

Membership: Via email, the board approved the membership applications for Tony & Lynette Schwend, Misti Robertson, and Kyla Sabrosky.

New membership applications have been received for Tanya & David Punt and Rachel Adams. Rachel Adams is under the age of 22 and falls under here family's membership; her application fees will be returned.

Social Activities: No report.

Rentals: Rental manager submitted an activity report for August 2007. The 2008 will be set at the October 4 meeting.

The board discussed rental income verses cons of renting clubhouse to non-members. The board decided to allow rentals at least through 2008. The income verses the cons will be reevaluated a year from now.

Unfinished Business: The board discussed by-law changes, types of memberships, work days and dues. The discussion was tabled for the next meeting.

New Business: The club purchased a brush hog for maintaining the grounds.

Sue Malmstrom and Jimmie are the Nominating Committee for the 2008 board positions. Please contact either of them if you are interested in a position on the board.

The board discussed having another work day in October (to work on the arena and arena lights). Jimmie is going to contact NW Energy about replacing some of the light poles.

Coke has been contacted about replacing outdated products in the machine.

Director Reports:

3-Year Director – No report.

2-Year Director – Sandie made a presentation on the bid for the arena enhancements.

The bid was for \$750 for use of equipment and labor (providing the club provide 2 additional laborers). The board discussed purchasing the needed panels (4) from Twenty X Panels. Sue Malmstrom motioned to accept the bid and purchase of panels; Sandie

seconded. The board approved. For best results, the bidder recommended making the improvements in the fall rather than the spring.

1-Year Director – No report.

Announcements: The next Billings Saddle Club Board meeting will be Thursday, October 4, 2007, at the Billings Saddle Club.

Sue Schwend motioned to adjourn the meeting and Nancy seconded the motion. The board approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Teri Bakken



Our wonderful sponsors generously provide gifts for us to offer as prizes and awards at our barrel races and shows and O-Mok-Sees. We couldn't bring in the interest and money and competitors without their generosity. *Please remember to bring your business to these folks.* The complete, current sponsor listing is on our website.



**"THE VISION MUST BE FOLLOWED BY THE
VENTURE. IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO STARE UP THE
STEPS - WE MUST STEP UP THE STAIRS."**

- Vance Havner

While enjoying our lovely club grounds, have you seen the deer in the arena, return alley, rimrocks and barns? They LOVE our little oasis. We are so blessed to have this little spot on the planet to enjoy. Take time to notice!

“UNDER CONSTRUCTION”

If you're out at the Saddle Club this Fall, you will notice that the main arena will be intermittently under construction, or remodel, actually. Your board has arranged to have some fence work done to make the arena more safe and user-friendly to all users. You're gonna like it!!



"I CAN'T DO IT' NEVER YET ACCOMPLISHED ANYTHING: 'I WILL TRY' HAS ACCOMPLISHED WONDERS."

- George P. Burnham

DISCUSSION/VOTING ITEMS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING:

We need input from the membership about how the club can go about getting our necessary projects done. The bulk of the work is being done on a primarily volunteer basis, and by just a few members. This is simply not fair. *Please provide your input* as to how a more equitable distribution of the work could occur. Please speak to a board member soon with your input.

Late club dues payments If a member does not meet the March 1 deadline for paying renewal membership dues, they will have to pay the higher, non-member rate at the time they do choose to renew.

Different types of memberships for working members vs. non-working members. Some suggestions discussed (that other clubs have implemented) are in having **various levels of membership**, by which those that do not want to participate on the Board of Directors or in work days, putting on events, and helping with maintenance and necessary projects will pay a higher annual membership than those that do participate; or perhaps that everyone is charged a higher membership, with pre-determined credit amounts given upon participation. The idea being, that if we had more money to work with, we could pay for some of the work to be done, instead of relying solely upon our busy, overworked volunteers.

Raise the price of all memberships Maybe it is time that everyone paid a higher annual membership. In comparison to membership rates in other clubs, ours are extremely low. The idea being, that if we had more money to work with, we could pay for some of the work to be done, instead of relying solely upon our busy, overworked volunteers.

Is it profitable to continue to rent the clubhouse to non-members? The profit vs. cost is marginal.

Board Proposals to be presented at November general meeting:

- Raise dues to \$100 for a family membership; \$50 for a single membership. This is being necessitated by the lack of membership participation in the work days.
- Assess a \$25 late charge in the event membership dues are not paid by March 1st if the member has not asked for an extension under the hardship clause (Article IV, Section 6) see below.....

Bylaw change:

ARTICLE IV

Dues

Section 1 The initiation fee the annual dues and late charge, if applicable, shall be set by the Board of Directors and ratified by the membership at the annual business meeting in November.

Section 2 Annual dues shall start from January 1st of each year and shall be payable within 60 days thereafter. Any member who fails to pay dues on or before March 1st shall be automatically dropped from membership unless the member complies with Article IV, Section 6. Any member dropped from membership for non-payment of dues will be assessed a late charge, in addition to the current dues, in order to be reinstated to membership for the current year.

Section 6 In order to maintain harmony and accord in the club and so the club officers will not have to enforce dropping anyone from the active membership because of non-payment of dues by March 1st – if any member feels it will present a hardship it will be up to you, the member, to contact the Membership Chairman and present your problem prior to March 1st. The membership Chairman will confer with the membership committee and if the committee deems it a hardship case will make arrangement with the member and present it to the Board of Directors for approval. If the special arrangements for payment are not adhered to, the member will be automatically dropped from active membership. Any member paying dues under the hardship clause of this section who competes for points in any area must have dues paid by April 1st.

2007 Montana State O-Mok-See

Townsend, MT

Billings Saddle Club Members Placing

Complete results at www.omoksee.org

Haley Schwend (8-11): 3rd Speed Barrels, 1st Key Race; 3rd Flag Race; 2nd Pole Bending; 3rd Barrel & Stake; 6th Pair Poles – Reserve High Point 8-11

Alex Cole (12-15): 5th Speed Barrels; 2nd Keg Race; 7th Flag Race; 1st Pole Bending; 1st Barrel & Stake; 3rd Team Arena; 3rd Express Rescue – High Point 12-15

Muri Cole (12-15): 3rd Pole Bending; 3rd Barrel & Stake; 3rd Team Arena – 7th Overall 12-15

Parker Jimison (12-15): 3rd Team Arena

Samantha Sorlie (12-15): 6th Pole Bending; 6th Express Rescue

Sue Malmstrom (Sr. Women): 2nd Speed Barrels; 4th Key Race; 1st Key Race (New Record); 1st Flag Race; 9th Pole Bending; 1st Barrel & Stake (New Record) – High Point Sr. Women

Pat Cole (Sr. Women): 6th Speed Barrels; 7th Key Race; 6th Pole Bending; 4th Team Speed Barrels – 10th Overall Sr. Women

Jimmy Jimison (Sr. Men): 5th Speed Barrels; 3rd Flag Race; 7th Barrel & Stake; 4th Team Speed Barrels; 5th Express Rescue – 7th Overall Sr. Men

Steven Sorlie (16-39 Men): 9th Flag Race

Kitty Sorlie (31-45 Women): 8th Pole Bending

Sue Schwend (Sr. Women): 10th Keg Race; 10th Key Race, 8th Flag Race; 4th Team Speed Barrels

Larry Schwend (16-39 Men): 4th Flag Race; 2nd Pole Bending; 4th Team Speed Barrels; 5th Express Rescue – 6th Overall 16-39 Men

Tony Schwend: 8th Express Rescue

Chisum Green (Under 8): 6th Pole Bending; 5th Barrel & Stake; 6th Polo Turn; 8th Mini Pair

Taylor Green (Under 8): 8th Mini Pair

Tressa Schwend (Under 8): 8th Pole Bending; 9th Polo Turn

Merrin Schwend (Under 8): 10th Pole Bending; 7th Polo Turn

Jared Schwend (8-11): 1st Barrel & Stake; 6th Pair Poles

Just a reminder, we NEED sponsors for the Yearly awards. Just to bring everyone up to speed, last year we decided to do something different for the buckles. Instead of getting the usual buckles through Montana Silversmiths, we had Shane at Bear Mountain Silversmith's create a custom buckle for us (designed by Sandy Green). They were very nice and well worth the expense. This year Shane advised us well in advance that the buckles would be \$165 each this year due to the increase in material costs. So early this year I put in three requests for members to help locate sponsors for the buckles. We are only asking for \$100 per buckle, and for sponsoring a buckle they would be allowed to put a sign in the arena for a year.

So far I have had three verbal commitments, but not money in hand. We will need a total of nine sponsors. Five for the Omoksee awards and four for the Horse Show awards. If any club members own a business, or are on good terms with their employer, we could sure use the help. Or if anyone would like to sponsor a buckle as a member, it would be greatly appreciated. If you can help, or have a question, please feel free to call Jim Sorlie at 670-9870 or email jimsorlie@gmail.com.

I am also looking for feedback on this year's activities. We are in the process of planning the 2008 schedule, so if you have any thoughts, concerns or suggestions, now is the time to let us know. Are there any other types of events or projects you would like to see us try next year, let us know.

One possible event we can still participate in is the Holiday parade. I would need to know as soon as possible if there is any interest. If we wait until the last minute, we will be placed at the back of the parade.

I would also like to thank everyone that helped out at any of our events this past year. Things went a bit smoother and as we have had members take a more active role in these events. It makes things better for everyone if we ALL just help out when we can.

Again, thank you to one and all,

Jim Sorlie

	6/16	6/29	7/13	National	8/10	8/17	8/25	State	Total
*Chisum Green		140	180	890	155	170	190	175	1900
*Taylor Green		130	60	660	85	110	50	15	1110
*Krissy VanderVoort	160	160	140		130				590
Allie Allen					70	150	80		300
Tressa Schwend						20	110	50	180
Merrin Schwend						20	60	50	130
Braden Tomlin	120								120
Tristan Hoffman			90						90
									0
									0
									0
									0

* Qualified for Year-End Awards

Ages 8 - 11

	6/16	6/29	7/13	National	8/10	8/17	8/25	State	Total
*Haley Schwend	160		150	850	160	190	160	455	2125
*Jared Schwend	110		70	350	30	160	100	125	945
Ridge Tomlin	110								110
									0
									0
									0
									0
									0
									0
									0
									0
									0

* Qualified for Year-End Awards

Ages Over 40

	6/15	6/29	7/13	National	8/10	8/17	8/25	State	Total
*Sue Malmstrom	190	90	140	1110	50	50	160	480	2270
Jimmie Jimison		190	80	660	170			227.5	1327.5
*Pat Cole	100	90		310	110	90	110	157.5	967.5
*Kitty Sorlie	40	90	50		70	130	80	30	490
Brad Green			110	145		120	80	0	455
*Tim McDonnell	110		10		10	90			220
*Sue Schwend	50		0	40	0	0	10	77.5	177.5
*Teri Bakken		0	10	65	10	20	40		145
Sandy Green		10	60	45					115
Tom Malmstrom		30	20				10	0	60
*Kathy Adams			20		0	0	10		30
Nancy Bjelland			0		0	0			0
Quincy Zahn			0			0			0

* Qualified for Year-End Awards

THANKS to Nancy Bjelland for the following articles: (please all feel free to forward other items of interest!)

10 Most Poisonous Plants for Horses

Of the hundreds of toxic plants in North America, only a handful are likely to bring serious harm to horses. Here are the most poisonous ones to watch out for.

Take a stroll through any pasture, and there among the grasses you'll find any number of different plants. Small vines, broad-leafed weeds, some wildflowers you recognize--some you don't. And, as disquieting as it may be to contemplate, the chances are pretty good that at least some are toxic to horses. Hundreds of poisonous plants grow in North America, and many are extremely common. "I defy anyone to tell me they have a pasture with zero poisonous plants," says Jeffery Hall, DVM, PhD, a toxicologist at Utah State University.

The good news, of course, is that the vast majority of those plants pose little threat to horses. For one thing, most of them are unpalatable, and horses who are filling up on quality forage aren't likely to spend a lot of time grazing on the few bitter leaves populating their pasture. Another factor that protects horses is their size--a 1,000-pound animal has to consume significantly higher quantities of most toxins than a smaller animal does to feel any effects. So, for the most part, as long as your horses are healthy and your pasture is in good shape, you have little to worry about.

However, some plants are cause for concern either because even a curious nibble can spell doom or because repeated browsing over weeks or months can lead to serious illness and death. All are worth getting to know by sight--not only so you can eliminate them from your horse-keeping areas, but also so that you can avoid encounters with them in the woods, on the roadsides and along the waterways where you ride. According to Anthony Knight, BVSc, MRCVS, plant toxicologist from Colorado State University, these 10 plants are those most dangerous to horses in the United States:

Bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*)

Also known as: brake fern, eagle fern

ID: A perennial fern with triangular leaves that can reach two to three feet high. Grows in

clumps in woodlands and moist open areas.

Range: Coast to coast, except for the Mediterranean and desert climates of Southern California and the Southwest.

The danger: Bracken fern contains thiaminase, which inhibits absorption of thiamin, which is vitamin B1. Thiamin is necessary to nerve function, and deficiencies can lead to neurological impairment. The relative toxicity of individual leaves is low--horses must consume hundreds of pounds to experience ill effects. However, bracken fern is unique among the toxic plants in that some horses seem to develop a taste for it and will seek it out even when other forages are available.

Signs: Signs are related to neural dysfunctions resulting from vitamin B1 deficiency and can include depression, incoordination and blindness.

What to do: Large doses of thiamin over the course of a week or two can aid in the recovery of horses whose bracken consumption is discovered before the neurological signs are severe.

Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)

Also known as: poison hemlock, spotted hemlock

ID: A multi-stemmed perennial weed with toothed, fernlike leaves and clusters of small white flowers. The stems have purple spots, which are most evident near the base of the plant.

Range: Grows wild along roadsides and other open uncultivated areas throughout North America.

The danger: Hemlock leaves, stems and seeds contain several potent neurotoxins that affect both the central and peripheral nervous systems. Four to five pounds is a lethal dose for a horse. Most animals will avoid the plant.

Signs: Signs appear within an hour or two of consumption, starting with nervousness, tremors and incoordination, progressing to depression and diminished heart and respiratory rates and possibly colic. Death results from respiratory failure.

What to do: There is no treatment, but if smaller doses were consumed, animals may recover with supportive care.

Tansy ragwort (*Senecio* spp.)

Also known as: Tansy ragwort, groundsel

ID: A multi-stemmed weed with alternating leaves that produces clusters of small daisy-like yellow flowers.

Range: About 70 species of senecio grow throughout the contiguous United States, in many different habitats. Many are common in pastures and along roadsides.

The danger: Levels of toxicity vary among different members of the species, but all are thought to contain at least some concentration of pyrrolizidine alkaloids, which inhibit cell division, especially in the liver. Damage to the liver is cumulative and irreversible, and most horses succumb to chronic exposure over time, after consuming between 50 and 150 pounds, in total.

Signs: Often, there is no evidence of consumption until signs of liver failure begin to appear: photosensitization, diminished appetite and weight loss, progressing to depression, incoordination and jaundice.

What to do: There is no treatment for advanced stages of liver disease due to this toxin.

Johnsongrass/Sudan grass (*Sorghum* spp.)

ID: Both johnsongrass and Sudan grass are coarse-stemmed grasses with broad, veined leaves that can grow to six feet in height. Both produce large, multi-branched seed heads.

Range: Johnsongrass is a wild grass native to the southern climates, where it grows along roadways and other uncultivated open areas. A close relative, Sudan grass, and its hybrids are cultivated throughout the United States as a forage crop.

The danger: The leaves and stems of johnsongrass and Sudan grass contain a cyanide compound, which when metabolized inhibits the body's ability to absorb oxygen, in effect suffocating the animal; young shoots of johnsongrass contain the highest concentration of the toxin. Because horses do not metabolize the cyanide compound as efficiently as ruminant animals do, grazing healthy adult plants is unlikely to harm them, but circumstances that injure the plant--wilting, trampling, frost--can chemically liberate the cyanide within the leaves, rendering them dangerous to all species. Cultivated hybrids of Sudan grass typically contain less cyanide, if any. Both species can also accumulate toxic levels of nitrates if over-fertilized. Cyanide concentration drops to safe levels when the grasses are cured for hay, but nitrates, if present, do not.

Signs: Signs are consistent with cyanide poisoning. The first indication is rapid breathing, which progresses to tremors, frequent urination and defecation, gasping and convulsions.

What to do: Supportive drug therapy can offset the effects of less severe cyanide poisoning.

Locoweed (*Astragalus* spp. or *Oxytropis* spp.)

Also known as: Crazy weed

ID: Leafy perennials with short stems and compound leaves that grow in tuft-like forms from a single taproot. Some species may be covered with silvery hairs. The flowers, often white or purple, are borne on leafless stalks.

Range: Different species of locoweed--spotted or blue, woolly, purple, Lambert's, two-grooved milk vetch, white-point--grow in varied terrains throughout the West and Southwest, often in dry, sandy soil.

The danger: All toxic species of locoweed contain swainsonine, an alkaloid that inhibits the production of the enzyme necessary for saccharide metabolism, and the resulting sugar buildup disrupts the function of brain cells.

Signs: Strange behavior is usually the first evidence noticed; horses may bob their heads, adopt exaggerated, high-stepping gaits or stagger and fall.

What to do: There is no treatment for advanced locoism, and its effects are irreversible. Horses with less severe poisoning may recover when access to the weed is removed.

Oleander (*Nerium oleander*)

Also known as: Rose laurel, adelfa, rosenlorbeer

ID: An evergreen shrub that can reach the size of a small tree, oleander has elongated, thick leathery leaves that can grow to three to 10 inches long. The flowers, which grow in large clusters at the end of branches, are one to three inches in diameter and can be white, pink or red.

Range: Hardy only in hot climates, oleander is used extensively in landscaping across the southern United States, from California to Florida. It is also grown as a potted plant in northern areas.

The danger: All parts of the plant contain the toxins oleandrin and neriin, which disrupt the beating of the heart. The leaves remain toxic when dried. About 30 to 40 leaves can be deadly to a horse.

Signs: Effects are usually seen several hours after ingestion and last over 24 hours. Signs include colic, difficulty breathing, tremors, recumbency and an irregular heart rate. The pulse may be either slowed or accelerated.

What to do: Horses can survive if treated early with supportive care, such as the

administration of activated charcoal to inhibit further toxin absorption and the use of anti-arrhythmic drugs to stabilize the heart.

Red maple trees (*Acer rubrum*)

ID: A medium-sized tree with leaves that are green in the spring and summer, with shallow notches, bright red stems and a whitish underside; in fall, the leaves turn bright red. The bark is smooth and pale gray on young trees, and becomes dark and broken on older trees.

Range: The native range is eastern North America, from Canada to Florida and west to Minnesota and eastern Texas, but ornamental specimens have been planted all over the country.

The danger: Ingestion of fresh, growing red maple leaves seems to do little or no harm, but when the leaves *wilt* they become extremely toxic to horses. Access to wilted leaves is most common after storms, which may cause branches to fall into pastures, or in the autumn when the leaves fall and are blown into grazing areas. The toxins in wilted red maple leaves cause the red blood cells to break down so that the blood can no longer carry oxygen; the kidneys, liver and other organs may also be damaged. As little as a pound or two of leaves can be fatal.

Signs: Depending on how many leaves were eaten, signs can appear within a few hours or as long as four or five days after consumption. Signs include lethargy; refusal to eat; dark red-brown or black urine; pale yellowish gums and mucous membranes at first, advancing to dark muddy brown; increased respiratory rate; rapid heart rate; dehydration.

What to do: The only treatment is the administration of large amounts of intravenous fluids and possibly blood transfusions. Recovery depends on how many leaves were consumed and how promptly the horse receives care. (Read about one horse's recovery in [Red Maple Leaf Poisoning Scare.](#))

Special note: Research indicates that the leaves of at least two related species--the silver and sugar maples--may contain the same toxic elements as red maples, but in less toxic amounts.

Water hemlock (*Cicuta* spp.)

Also known as: Spotted water hemlock

ID: A perennial weed with erect hairless stems that can grow to six feet from clusters of fleshy roots. The stems are hollow and branching, thicker at the base. Leaves are elongated and toothed, and the small white flowers form flat, umbrella-shaped clusters at the ends of branches.

Range: Water hemlock grows throughout the contiguous United States and is most likely to be found in marshy areas of meadows and along streams and irrigation ditches.

The danger: Water hemlock is considered one of the most toxic plants in the United States. All parts of the plant contain a cicutoxin alkaloid that affects the central nervous system, but the toxin is most concentrated in the root. Because cattle are more likely to pull up and consume the root, that species is considered most at risk of poisoning, but horses have also been known to browse the plant; less than a pound of the leaves and stems can be fatal. The toxin levels in the leaves and stems diminish as the plant ages during the growing season, and additional amounts of toxin are lost when the plant is dried, but water hemlock is never considered safe for consumption. Most animals will avoid the plant.

Signs: The toxins affect neurons primarily within the brain, causing various signs, including excessive salivation, dilated pupils and nervousness, progressing rapidly to difficult breathing, degeneration of the heart and skeletal muscles, seizures and

convulsions; death usually results from respiratory paralysis. Signs of poisoning appear within an hour of ingestion, and death typically follows within two to three hours.

What to do: Supportive care initiated before the convulsions begin can offset the worst effects of the seizures, but horses who survive are likely to have experienced permanent damage to the heart and skeletal muscles.

Yellow star thistle/Russian knapweed (*Centaurea* spp.)

Also known as: Barnaby's thistle

ID: Yellow star thistle is an annual weed that branches out from a single base stem to form a spherical plant up to three feet tall; its round yellow flowers are surrounded by stiff spines 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch long. Russian knapweed spreads via a creeping root system; its erect, stiff stems grow two to three feet high and are covered with gray hairs, and its thistle-like flowers range from purple to white; Russian knapweed has no spines or prickles.

Range: Both plants appear throughout the Western United States, approximately from Missouri to California, and from Mexico northward, almost to Canada. They appear as weeds along roadsides, in cultivated fields and pastures.

The danger: Both plants contain a toxic agent that has a neurological effect on the brain that inhibits the nerves and control chewing. The poisoning is chronic in nature; to receive a toxic dose, horses must consume 50 to 200 percent of their body weight over 30 to 90 days.

Signs: Affected horses may appear to have tense or clenched facial muscles, and they are unable to bite or chew their food effectively. Weight loss is also common.

What to do: There is no treatment, and any neural damage is permanent. Euthanasia is recommended if the horse is too debilitated to eat.

Yew (*Taxus* spp.)

ID: A woody evergreen shrub with closely spaced, flat, needlelike leaves a half-inch to one inch long. Berries are bright red or yellow, soft and juicy with a hole in the end, where the dark seed is visible.

Range: Western yew and American yew are native to the West Coast and to the Eastern and central United States, respectively, but these two species along with the Japanese and English yews are commonly planted as ornamentals nationwide.

The danger: All parts of the yew plant, except for the fleshy portion of the berries, contain taxine, an alkaloid that causes respiratory and cardiac collapse. The leaves remain toxic even after dried. A single mouthful can be deadly to a horse within minutes.

Signs: Sudden death is the most typical sign of yew ingestion. Animals found alive may be trembling and colicky, with difficulty breathing and a slowed heart rate.

What to do: There is no treatment for yew poisoning. Avoidance is critical; most yew poisonings occur when trimmings are thrown into a pasture after a pruning.

EQUUS thanks Anthony Knight, BVSc, MRCVS, and Jill Richardson, DVM, for their assistance in the preparation of this article. For more information, visit Knight's website, [Guide to Poisonous Plants](#).

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