

## Yellow Peril - beware the Killer Weed

Common ragwort (*Senecio Jacobaea*) is the most common form of poisoning in livestock and in March yet another pony suffered horrific pain and died in our county due to ragwort poisoning.

Ragwort also damages our environment by smothering rare wild flowers and most worrying is that research now proves that the pyrrolizidine alkaloids (the poisons in ragwort) have been found in eggs, grain, milk and honey.



**British Horse Society**  
Registered Charity No. 210504

Some useful information about ragwort

1. Ragwort is easily identified; the plant produces a rosette of green ragged edged leaves in early summer and then grows into a 3ft upright plant with a woody slightly red stem. It produces a large head of flowers with daisy like petals of bright yellow.

2. Ragwort is so poisonous it is a listed plant under the 1959 Weeds Act so to allow it to grow and flower on your land, whether owned or rented by you, contravenes the law.

3. This weed is killed easily before it flowers by spraying with a 2.4D herbicide. A natural non-toxic environmentally friendly spray is also available called Barrier H. No animals must be allowed to graze on sprayed land until all the ragwort plants have rotted into the ground.

4. Mature ragwort plants pull up easily but all plants **MUST** be burnt. **ALWAYS WEAR GLOVES WHEN HANDLING RAGWORT.**

5. This plant retains its poisonous toxins whether growing, sprayed or dried in food.

6. Each mature plant can produce up to 150,000 seeds and these can spread up to a 10 mile radius.

If you want to safeguard the environment for future generations this is how **YOU** can help

a. Check your land regularly for ragwort plants and treat as necessary.

b. When you see ragwort plants in your locality pull them up and incinerate them. Please always wear gloves when handling ragwort.

c. When you spot large areas of ragwort in fields or on road side verges contact either myself or the Oxfordshire County Council Environmental Services (tel. no 01869 241144) with full details of the location.

During July and August the British Horse Society clearance volunteers will be working throughout Oxfordshire clearing ragwort from public land, commons etc. So if you can spare a few hours to help please contact me. Lets make our county a safer place for both animals and humans, free from the dangers of ragwort.

If you would like further information, leaflets, or even a field visit to help identify ragwort, please contact me, the BHS welfare officer Miss DM Harris on 01993 702844.

**Please note.** Miss Jo Cook of Shipton is the local contact for this project, so if you wish to help, or obtain advice, please contact her on 830288.