

Houndstongue

Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) is a biennial forb of the Boraginaceae family. This non-native plant is thought to have been accidentally introduced into the United States from Eurasia as a contaminant in seed. Houndstongue presents a problem in rangeland and pasture areas due to its toxicity to livestock. The plant contains alkaloids that can be lethal, especially to horses. The seeds are a nuisance as well, with Velcro-like protrusions, houndstongue seed clings aggressively to clothing and fur of pets, livestock and wildlife.

Houndstongue has been designated a noxious weed species by the Colorado State Noxious Weed Act and is categorized as a List B species, defined as “common enough in parts of the state that eradication is not feasible, though still recommended for eradication, suppression, or containment depending on distribution and density”. This species is under proposal to be added to the Larimer County weed list, which would mean property owners will be required to prevent the dispersal of seed, or at a minimum keep this weed mowed.

Typical of biennial plants, houndstongue emerges as a rosette in the first season then sends up a flowering stalk the second season. Mature plants can be up to four feet tall with reddish purple flowers. Reproduction is by seed only. Management methods include:

- Mechanical removal as long as 2-3 inches of the taproot is severed.
- Herbicide applications of dicamba, 2,4-D, Escort, Telar, Plateau, or Tordon.
- An established, competitive stand of desirable vegetation minimizes invasion by houndstongue or any other noxious weed species.

Targeted grazing for management of houndstongue is not an option due to toxicity. There are currently no insect biocontrol agents approved for management of houndstongue in the United States.

For further information on houndstongue or any other noxious weed species, call the Larimer County Land Stewardship office to schedule a site visit for identification and management recommendations - 970-498-5769.