

Please be vigilant for sycamore seeds and seedlings in your horses' fields.



Sycamore seeds and seedlings can contain a toxin that halts the normal metabolism of muscle, meaning that it does not have energy for normal muscle contraction. The toxin also has direct toxic effects on heart muscle and muscles involved in normal breathing.



Sycamore toxicity (also called atypical myopathy) can be rapidly fatal, and approximately 70% of cases will die within 72 hours of onset of clinical signs, even with intensive care in a referral hospital. The quantity of seeds ingested does not dictate outcome (survival or non-survival), since some seeds will contain a little toxin, and some seeds will contain a greater amount. The 'helicopter' seeds can also travel some distance through the air, meaning that it is not only horses that graze in fields where there is a sycamore tree that are at risk. An online article in the Horse and Hound offers advice on how to remove sycamore seedlings, seeds and trees (trees may be under a protection order): <https://www.horseandhound.co.uk/features/how-to-remove-sycamore-seeds-horses-657818>



Clinical signs to look out for include generalised weakness, muscle trembling, colic-like signs, unwillingness to walk or a stiff gait, difficulty breathing (increased breathing rate and effort), high or irregular heart rate, recumbency (excessive lying down) and red/brown urine. Sudden death is a possibility; a horse can be found dead in the field.

Early identification of clinical signs and aggressive intensive care treatment carries the best prognosis.



Please contact your vet immediately if you identify any of the above clinical signs. We are happy to discuss individual cases with your veterinary surgeon.