

Russian Knapweed

Acroptilon repens

Common Names: Hardheads, Turkestan thistle

Species Affected: Equines, Chickens

Toxin: Sesquiterpene lactone; possibly others

Description:

It is a bushy perennial reaching heights of 3 feet, it produces many flowers that are purple and pink. The stems are hairy, and the leaves grow at the base of the stems.

Growing Location and Timing :

Russian knapweed can be found growing in irrigation ditches, rangeland, and along roads. It will begin growth in the early spring, bolts late spring to early summer and flower into the fall. Russian knapweed is allelopathic, meaning that it releases toxins that make the soil around itself non growable to other plant species.

Affects on Livestock:

Toxicity can cause chewing disease.

Signs and Symptoms:

Exposure can result in constant chewing motions, not being able to consume food or water, inability to swallow, possible tongue curling. Large quantities must be consumed for symptoms to show, roughly 50% to 60% of total body weight over 1 to 3 months.

Preventative Measures:

Remove livestock from areas where Russian knapweed is present, and stop feeding hay that may be contaminated with knapweed.

