

Sycamore and Acorn Poisoning



We'd like to draw your attention to an important seasonal risk that affects horses and donkeys across the UK: sycamore and acorn poisoning. These natural hazards are most dangerous in September through November, especially after strong winds or storms. Every year, we see cases of horses fall ill due to accidental ingestion — many of which could be avoided with awareness and early action.

Sycamore Poisoning (Atypical Myopathy)

Sycamore trees (*Acer pseudo-platanus*) release “helicopter” seeds in autumn and toxic seedlings in spring. These contain a toxin called hypoglycin A, which interferes with muscle metabolism and leads to a condition called Atypical Myopathy. It is often fatal without immediate treatment.

Clinical signs of Atypical Myopathy:

- Muscle stiffness or weakness
- Reluctance to move
- Dark red or brown urine
- Sweating and distress
- Sudden collapse or death in severe cases

Diagnosis & treatment:

Diagnosis is usually based on the horse or donkey's history with a blood test to confirm atypical myopathy.

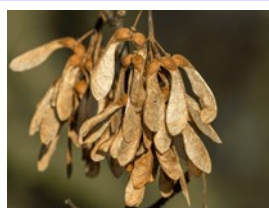


Prevention Tips:

- Identify and remove sycamore trees from or near grazing areas
- Fence off affected areas, especially after windy weather
- Pick up seeds manually if practical
- Provide supplementary forage to reduce grazing of risky

Treatment

Treatment must be prompt and includes intensive fluid therapy, pain relief, and supportive care. Sadly, survival rates decrease the longer treatment is delayed.



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Acorn Poisoning

While many horses ignore acorns, others may eat them in large quantities — especially if grazing is poor. Acorns, oak leaves, and young oak shoots contain tannins, which are toxic to the kidneys and digestive system when consumed in excess.

Clinical signs of acorn poisoning:

- Colic-like symptoms
- Diarrhoea (possibly bloody)
- Dehydration
- Depression and weakness
- In severe cases, kidney failure

What You Can Do Now

- Walk your fields weekly to check for sycamore seeds, seedlings, and fallen acorns
- Ensure horses and donkeys are not turned out hungry — full bellies are less curious!
- Consider temporary strip grazing or paddock rotation if trees are present

Reach out if you're unsure about tree species on your property — we're happy to help identify them

Prevention Tips:

- Regularly clear fallen acorns from grazing areas
- Use electric fencing to block access to oak trees
- Ensure horses have access to adequate forage to discourage browsing

Treatment:

Supportive care, fluid therapy, and anti-inflammatories can help, but prognosis depends on how much was consumed and how quickly treatment begins.



When to Call the Vet

If you suspect your horse or donkey has ingested sycamore seeds or acorns or is displaying any unusual symptoms, please call us immediately. Early intervention can make all the difference.

Client evenings

10th September Pre-Purchase Examinations at Curland Equestrian TA3 5DS Doors open at 7pm for 7.30pm start.

24th September Equine Behaviour at Drakes Riding School TA19 9EY Doors open at 7pm for 7.30pm start.

If interested please RSVP to 01297304007

Welcome to our new member of staff

Hi, I'm Abi and I'm really excited to be joining the Summerleaze team in September! From an early age I've been passionate about animals and now share a collection of animals with my mum! We have 1 horse, 5 mini Shetlands, Alpaca's, dogs and to many cats to count! If I'm not in the saddle I'm often found at the beach or on the hills with the dogs. I look forward to meeting lots of you over the next few months!



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