
Autumn sneezeweed *Helenium autumnale*



Clump-forming perennial herb from a crown, 0.5 to 2 m tall. Leaves alternate, simple, elliptic to lanceolate, 6 to 15 cm long, 1 to 3 cm wide, serrate to almost entire; bases of leaves continuing as lines down the stem. Flowers yellow; borne in conspicuous heads. Found throughout the South but less common in the Coastal Plain; in moist places in pastures, bogs, and ditches.

Toxicity

The toxic principles are the glucoside sesquiterpene lactone and a phenol. Autumn sneezeweed appears to cause more severe symptoms than does bitter sneezeweed (see page 33). In the Rocky Mountain area, sheep have been severely poisoned by consumption of all portions of the autumn sneezeweed plant. Cattle may also be affected but require a much larger amount.

The plant retains its toxicity even after drying; therefore, heavily contaminated hay can cause problems. Most cases occur when animals are on summer pasture and other forage is not available.

Symptoms

Autumn sneezeweed is a severe irritant to the mucous membranes. Dullness, trembling, and weakness are first symptoms. In many instances, vomiting is prominent. For this reason, the illness is called "spewing sickness." Many vomiting animals inhale part of the regurgitated material into the trachea and develop inhalation pneumonia. These animals usually survive only to become chronically poor performers and perhaps die later from secondary ailments.

Treatment

There is no effective treatment.

Remove from source. Feed high protein feed, mineral supplement of 75 pounds salt and 25 pounds dicalcium phosphate; or feed sodium sulfate.