Hairy vetch *Vicia villosa*

**Annual, biennial, or rarely perennial, trailing or climbing herb, 0.5 to 1 m tall, with densely hairy stems (a cultivated variety is not hairy).** Leaves alternate, pinnately compound, with terminal leaflet modified into a branched tendril; leaflets 10 to 29, narrowly oblong to linear, 1 to 3 cm long. Flowers violet or rarely white, 1.2 to 2 cm long; 10 to 40 flowers borne together in racemose axillary clusters. Fruit, a flattened pod, 2 to 3 cm long, 7 to 10 mm broad. Found throughout the southern states east of the Mississippi River; mostly in fields, roadsides, and waste places.

**Toxicity**

A cyanogenetic glycoside is present in vetch seed. In Alabama, cattle have exhibited signs of cyanide poisoning after eating from a sack of vetch seed left in a barnyard.

**Symptoms**

Symptoms include bellowing, sexual excitement, a wild appearance, crawling on the ground, and death. Some species of vetch have been known to cause liver damage and photosensitization.

**Treatment**

Treat cyanide poisoning with sodium thiosulfate and sodium nitrite. If cattle exhibit photosensitization, keep them in a shady area and give antibiotics to prevent secondary infection.