



Water Hemlock

(Cicuta douglasii)



Water Hemlock is a highly toxic, native member of the Parsnip family. It grows mainly in wet or moist areas such as sloughs, wet meadows, and along streambanks. It is poisonous to all types of livestock and to humans, and the toxin affects the system so quickly that treatment is not usually possible.

The toxin (cicutoxin) is concentrated mainly in the horizontal chambers of the root bulb, but it is present throughout the leaves and stem as well. **The consumption of 0.1% of body weight of the green material (stems and leaves) is lethal.** However, the toxin content in a single bulb is enough to kill a large animal. Animals may also be poisoned if water hemlock is plowed under or if ground is reclaimed, since this may expose the root. Toxicity decreases through the growing season, and the toxicity of above-ground parts may be negligible when dry. The roots however are toxic at all times, even when dry.



Herbicide control of Water Hemlock is difficult as it grows mainly in wet areas. A mechanical control method that is effective is digging up the plant (taking care not to touch any part of the plant with bare skin), bagging it and destroying it.

For more information regarding Water Hemlock, please contact the Brazeau County Agricultural Department at (780) 542-7777.

