



Ballybrown Equine Clinic



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Sycamore Poisoning

Atypical Myopathy “Sycamore Poisoning” in Horses

Atypical myopathy (“Sycamore poisoning”) is a frequently fatal disease of horses caused by eating Sycamore seeds (“helicopters”) or seedlings. The disease results in muscle damage and particularly affects the muscles that enable the horse to stand and breathe. The heart muscle may also be affected. Horses with the disease may develop a range of signs but typically become very dull, weak, stiff and trembling. The first signs are often lethargy, a quiet demeanour or reluctance to work.

Even with intensive veterinary treatment, severely affected horses may die. However, with prompt, aggressive treatment cases can recover.

If you think your horse could have eaten sycamore seeds or seedlings and may be showing signs of atypical myopathy then you must contact your vet as a matter of urgency.

What are the signs of Atypical Myopathy?

- Depression
- Stiffness
- Reluctance to move
- Muscle tremors
- Sweating
- Weakness
- Lethargy
- Difficulty breathing
- Red or brown urine
- Choke
- Colic
- Low head carriage
- Fast or irregular heart beat
- Sudden collapse and death

If you are unfortunate enough to have had a case then you need to take measures to protect other horses from the same property as studies show that they too are likely to have ingested the toxin. When one case occurs more will often follow.