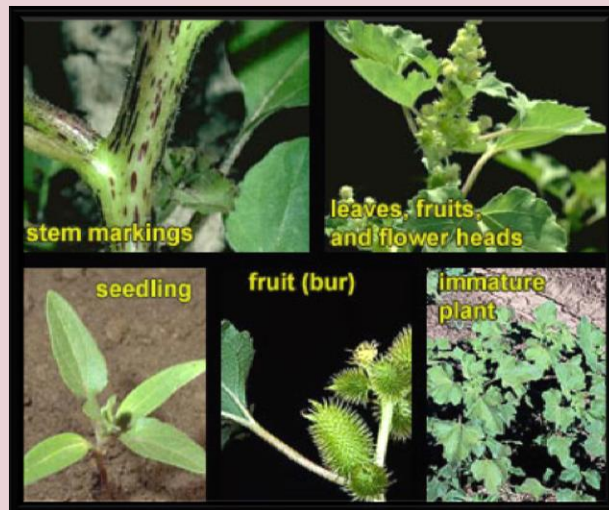




Common cocklebur

Common cocklebur is a coarse summer annual broadleaf plant. It inhabits open, often moist disturbed places in agricultural land and other areas. Ingestion of cocklebur seedlings and seeds at 1% or more of body weight can be fatal to livestock. The angled, sometimes red- or black-spotted stems of cocklebur grow 1 to 3 feet high. Leaves of this many-branched annual are alternate, hairy, rough-textured, somewhat heart-shaped, toothed, and lobed. Flowers are inconspicuous with male flowers in terminal spikes, female flowers in clusters in the leaf axils. The fruit is a hard, oval, prickly bur about 3/4 inch long containing two seeds. Because seeds germinate best after being soaked in water, the plants are usually found along the shores of ponds where water has receded or stream channels after a flood event.

Seedlings have small strap-shaped leaves 1/4 inch wide by 1 1/4 inches long.



TOXICITY RATING: High

All animals may be affected. Cattle, swine, sheep, and poultry are more at risk than horses and pets. There are several types of toxins in cocklebur, one being a glycoside, carboxyatractyloside, which causes hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and a group of sesquiterpene lactones which can cause vomiting (in those species capable of vomiting), weakness, tremors, weak pulse, a loss of appetite and convulsions. Liver damage may also result from these toxins, and death is likely if a sufficient dose was consumed (ingestion of green plant at approximately 0.75% of body weight). The seed bur can cause mechanical damage. The most common time for toxic signs is late spring and early summer for the seedlings, later in the summer for the burs, and at any time seed-contaminated prepared feeds are ingested. As the cocklebur plant matures, the toxicity decreases (except for the seeds). The seedlings are extremely dangerous, and typically sprout in wet areas, such as alongside streams, at the edges of ponds, in receding floodplains, etc. Animals will tend to avoid cocklebur, even the seedlings, as long as there is sufficient forage available. Species that are less discriminate eaters are particularly at risk where cocklebur grows. Once toxic signs develop, death may follow within 48 hours. Some animals may recover, but this may take weeks.

Herbicide application must be made before flowering, the smaller the better. Cutting down or mowing before a bur is made can also be effective.