

# Russian Knapweed, *Acroptilon repens*



**Identification:** Creeping perennial with erect, branched stems from one to three feet. Young stems are softly pubescent. Lower leaves with toothed margins. Upper leaves with entire margins and stiff hairs. Lavender flowers in thistle-like heads with papery, spineless bracts. Whiteish seeds and papus remain in seed heads.

**Habitat:** Cultivated fields, pastures and roadsides

**Animals Affected:** Horses

**Toxin Family:** Sesquiterpene lactones (neurotoxin)

**Other:** Causes the formation of lesions and eventually affects horses' ability to chew ("Chewing disease"). An increased tonicity of facial muscles causes horses to have a wooden expression. A lack of coordination of chewing muscles can cause frothy saliva, resembling rabies. Symptoms are very similar to yellow star thistle, but it appears Russian knapweed is more toxic, requiring a shorter feeding period to cause disease.

