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## A DEADLY MUSHROOM SPECIES

I had an interesting mushroom sample brought to the Extension Office this past week. The question was are my horses safe when I graze this pasture where these mushrooms have popped up? The mushroom area was about ½ acre and more densely in a 10 foot ring. My response was if you are seeing a lot of mushrooms in a ring, that is fairly common in yards and pastures and it's called fairy ring fungus in grass. Concerning the poisonous question, I would ask a mycologist at UNL to respond.

This particular response was surprising to me from Heather Hallen-Adams, an expert in food microbiology, molds and mycotoxins. The large mushroom species I obtained was called Chlorophyllum Molybdites, a major GI irritant in humans, and responsible for about 9/10 poisonous mushroom calls she gets from the poison control center. According to a University of Florida blog <http://goo.gl/ddofuW> this mushroom species can be deadly to dogs and horses.

Dogs are notorious for eating just about anything, and the nastier, the better – which is why the advice is to keep an eye out for poisonous mushrooms in your yards. Chlorophyllum Molybdites are often called the false parasol, and are a large, light-colored fungus that grows in grassy areas such as lawns or a pasture.

Though poisoning cases are rare, the false parasol causes intense gastrointestinal distress in people and may be deadly to dogs and horses. Puppies and adult dogs that like to chew are especially at risk for ingesting the fungus.

The false parasol is easy to spot against a grassy background. It is white or tan, it has a domed or flat cap and a thick stem; at maturity it may be several inches tall. Colonies often grow in circles, called “fairy rings.” If you search for Chlorophyllum Molybdites fairy ring on the internet, you can see various photos of them.

The Florida expert in the blog suggests that animal owners learn to identify the species, check their property often and destroy the mushrooms if they appear where animals might eat them. He's been involved in 10 to 15 cases of suspected mushroom poisoning in dogs over the last 18 months.

There's generally not much that veterinarians can do for afflicted dogs except provide intravenous fluids and palliative care to reduce distress and discomfort. Grazing animals such as horses may consume wild mushrooms accidentally as they browse on grass. Horses suspected of consuming false parasols should receive immediate veterinary care.

Unlike green plants, fungi lack chlorophyll and must live on organic matter in soil. The species of fungi normally found in grass feed on leaves, needles, tree limbs or wood, pine cones, nuts, dung or even other dead or living fungi. Various mushroom species often are very specific what they feed on. There is no spray that a homeowner can buy to control them. Simply use mechanical means for removal.



Just because you discovered a fairy ring in your yard doesn't mean the mushrooms are poisonous or the Chlorophyllum Molybdites species. More information on nuisance fungi in the landscape can be found in the NebGuide G1914 or at:  
<http://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/g1914.pdf>

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