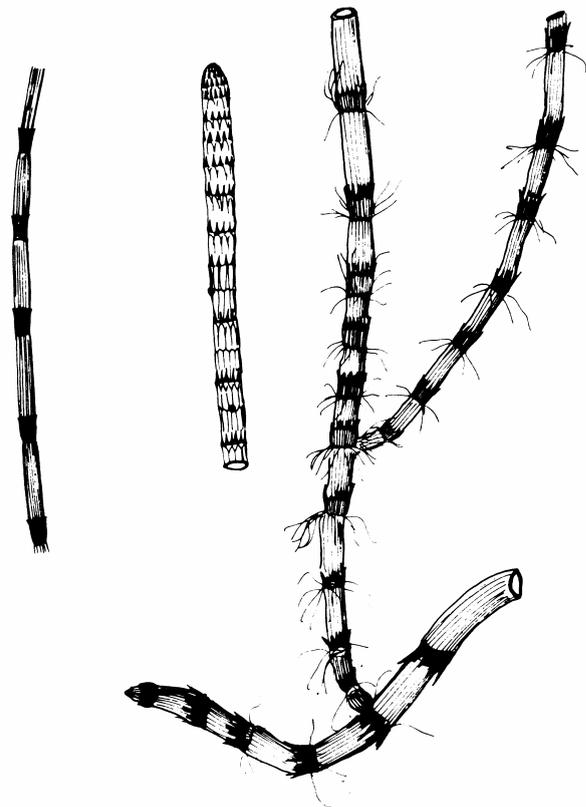




## INFORMATION SHEET 29: HORSETAILS

Horsetails are members of a very ancient plant family, distant relatives of which were alive during the Carboniferous era. They have a relatively simple growth type, producing upright stems from

*Equisetum fluviatile*  
= *E. limosum*



creeping rhizomes. The stems often support whorls of filament like leaves at intervals up the stem. They reproduce by means of spores, not seeds, and are related to ferns. They are poisonous, and remain poisonous even when they are dead. Animals should not be allowed into areas where treated plants are present.

### **Mechanical control**

Mowing is an effective way of controlling the growth of these plants. Regular mowing will keep the growth down but will not kill the plant. If you are mowing these plants on land that does not belong to you, you will be subject to the "Duty of Care" regulations, made under the Environmental Protection Act, 1991, which means you must dispose of the cut material at a registered disposal site, if the material is removed from the cut area.

### **Chemical control**

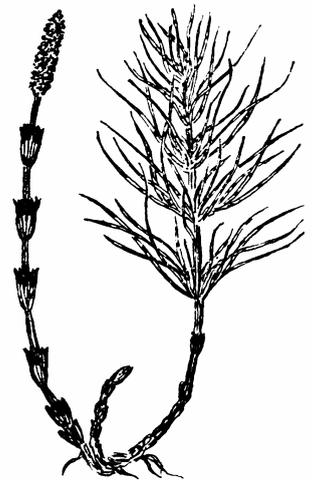
Horsetails are susceptible to herbicides containing dichlobenil. Herbicides should be applied in the early spring when growth is active. Only one treatment per season should be necessary. Re-treatment in following seasons may be necessary to control areas which were missed at the first application. Be sure to keep livestock out of treated areas.

## Biological control

There is no known biological control agent for these plants. Because they are poisonous, livestock will not eat them.

## Environmental control

Short term control can be achieved by shading the areas in which horsetails are known to occur with a thick sheet of black polythene. As soon as the polythene is removed the spores from previous generations will germinate and produce a fresh growth in the following Spring. The spores are very tolerant of adverse environmental conditions and cannot be destroyed.



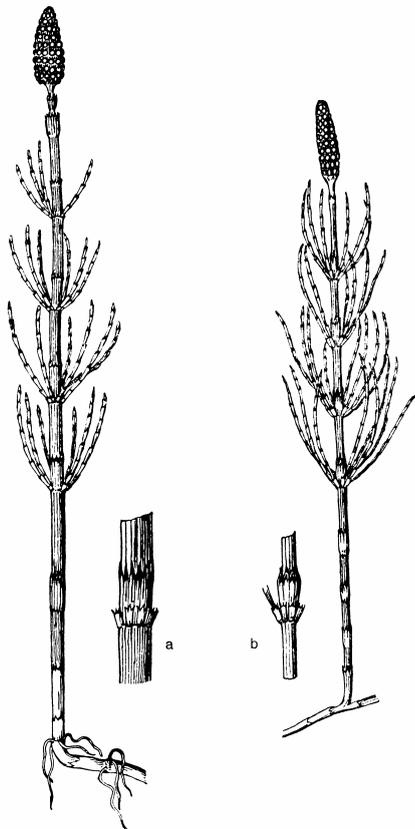
*Equisetum arvense* (Field Horsetail)

## Best option

The selection of the best method of control is determined by the time of treatment. If you want to control horsetails in the Spring then apply a herbicide. If you miss any plant with this treatment then mow the plants regularly.

If you want to control the plants in the Summer and Autumn, the mow the growth regularly and treat with a herbicide in the following Spring.

Repeat treatments of these plants may be necessary for a number of years due to spore survival.



Water Horsetail  
*Equisetum fluviatile* L.  
 $\frac{1}{6}$ th nat. size  
a internode with sheath

Marsh Horsetail  
*Equisetum palustre* L.  
 $\frac{1}{3}$ rd nat. size  
b internode with sheath

Page 1 illustrations from 'Le Milieu Aquatique' ISBN 2-85794-061-0 and Aquatic Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Oregon State University Press 1963

Page 2 illustration from 'A Handbook of Water Plants' ISBN 0 7232 1295 3

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Dr Jonathan Newman