

HEMLOCK WATER - DROPWORT

No – 22.22

On a recent Rail job in the Wales and Western region, an extremely toxic plant known as Hemlock Water Dropwort was identified by an ecologist who was working with the D&B team.

Hemlock water-dropwort is an **extremely toxic plant** that is poisonous to humans and livestock. It is most toxic when ingested and even small quantities can cause convulsions, seizures and death. **You will need to get medical attention immediately if any is ingested.** When it comes in contact with the skin, it can also cause skin irritation. The roots are the most toxic part of the plant, but the entire plant contains poisonous properties.

Symptoms of hemlock water-dropwort poisoning include:

- Trembling
- Burning in the digestive tract
- Increased salivation
- Dilated pupils
- Muscle pain
- Muscle weakness or muscle paralysis
- Rapid heart rate followed by a decreased heart rate
- Loss of speech
- Convulsions
- Unconsciousness or coma

Seek medical attention for any of these symptoms following contact with hemlock water-dropwort.

Season: Spring to Autumn (flowering May – July)

Habitat: Prefers a moist environment but can be found on drier soils. It is common on the sides of rivers, streams, ponds, and in damp meadow.

Description: Flowers are arranged in white umbels; stems are hollow, and leaves resemble flat leafed parsley or celery leaves. The whole plant is hairless, and it has tuberous pale yellow-white roots that resemble parsnips.

Precautions to manage the risk of hemlock water-dropwort poisoning and irritation include:

- Wearing gloves, long sleeved and full length trousers to ensure no skin could accidentally come into contact with the plant.
- Provide extra hand washing facilities and wash hands and wrists thoroughly before eating or smoking or leaving the worksite to



If you require any further information, please contact any member of the HSQE Team.