



The Government of Sark

AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT, SEA FISHERIES & PILOTAGE COMMITTEE

BEWARE – HEMLOCK WATER DROPWORT

There have been suspected cases of Hemlock poisoning on Sark. The Hemlock plant looks very like Cow Parsley and is **VERY TOXIC** to any persons or animal that come into contact with it.

Please be sure to wear gloves when handling the plant.

HEMLOCK WATER DROPWORT

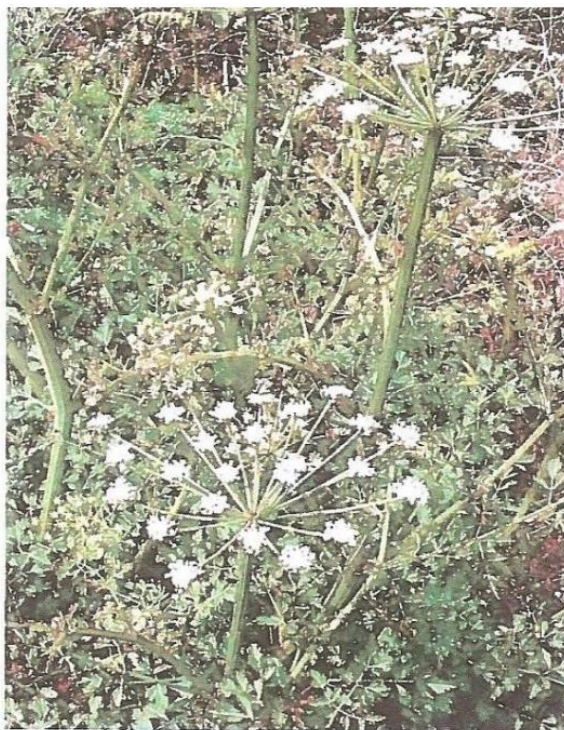
(*Oenanthe crocata*)

Hemlock Water Dropwort is a very poisonous weed commonly found growing in moist conditions along streams and douts.

The plants emerge from over wintered roots and flowering stems start to appear in late spring. These produce flat heads of small white flowers on stems that can grow up to 1.5m in height.

The most distinctive feature of this plant is the swollen white roots often referred to as "dead man's fingers". These roots are extremely poisonous and are readily eaten by livestock, often with fatal consequences from the poison they contain. They are often left exposed when streams and douts are dug out and caution must be taken before livestock is allowed access to fields where this has taken place.

Hemlock Water Dropwort produces large quantities of seed that can be readily spread along streams and douts.



CONTROL OF PLANTS

The best method of controlling Hemlock Water Dropwort is by cutting the stems before plants flower. Repeated cutting will eventually weaken plants.

Animal Poisoning

Ragwort is poisonous to horses, cattle, deer, sheep, pigs, goats, dogs and humans. Horses are particularly susceptible to poisoning. Even small amounts of Ragwort will cause damage to the liver with clinical signs only showing once the liver is 75% destroyed, at which stage the damage is irreversible. The British Horse Society estimates that more than 500 horses die in the UK each year from the effects of Ragwort poisoning.

There are often cases of horse and cattle poisoning by Ragwort (or by Hemlock Water Dropwort) in Guernsey.



The safe disposal of dug, pulled or cut Ragwort or Hemlock Water Dropwort plants is essential. Ragwort can still set and disperse seed, and all parts of the plants remain toxic. Livestock are particularly attracted to the dug roots of Water Dropwort.