

### Symptoms

- Muscle weakness or stiffness
- Colic like symptoms
- Lethargy
- Laboured breathing
- Fast or irregular heart rate
- Dark red-brown urine
- Choke
- Recumbency
- Sudden death

### Causes

Recent research, shows the disease to be caused by the toxin hypoglycin A, which can be found in the seeds of sycamore trees (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and to a lesser extent in their leaves and it is therefore assumed that the disease is caused by horses eating Sycamore seeds. Other trees of the Acer family may also be implicated, with the box elder tree being responsible for outbreaks of SPM (Seasonal Pasture Myopathy), a very similar disorder that is prevalent in Midwestern USA and Eastern Canada.

The toxin Hypoglycin A affects the body by preventing energy being produced within their muscle cells.

The disease is most common in the autumn when large numbers of seeds are falling and the spring when Sycamore seedlings may be eaten; however this is unproven as it has not been determined if the toxin is present in the seedlings.

Early recognition and treatment is essential and since the toxin directly targets aerobic energy metabolism, therapy should be targeted at promoting glucose metabolism and provided fluid diuresis.

### Treatment

Call a vet immediately if you suspect your horse is suffering from Atypical Myopathy.

Your vet will probably need your horse to be hospitalised, as horses suffering from Atypical Myopathy will need 24/7 nursing and monitoring for digestive and cardiac function. Fluid therapy is important to help protect the kidneys from damage, horses with atypical myopathy tend to become very dehydrated. Atypical Myopathy is a very painful condition therefore your vet is likely to administer strong pain relief to help keep your horse comfortable.