

OSU EXTENSION SERVICE

# Perilla Mint

The plant Perilla Mint (also known as: beefsteak plant, wild basil, purple perilla and rattlesnake weed) is being blamed for the death of 16 cows in Osage county, Oklahoma.

Perilla mint is very poisonous to cattle and other ruminants, as well as horses. All plant parts are toxic, especially the flowering structures. Dried plants in hay can be toxic, but the greatest risk is associated with consumption of fresh plant material, especially if flowers are present. Perilla mint contains ketones that cause acute respiratory distress syndrome in cattle (ARDS), also called panting disease. Treatment is often ineffective. Although these plants can occur anywhere in a pasture or feed lot, they typically favor semi-shaded moist environments, and are most frequently located around farm structures, edges of woods and along fence rows.

Poisoning from these weeds is a concern during late summer and early fall when other grasses and forages might be in short supply and perilla mint is flowering. Cattle will normally not feed on these toxic weeds unless there is a shortage of other food stuffs.

The plant is an erect, herbaceous



**DAVID  
CANTRELL**

annual that can grow to heights of 2 feet. The leaves are simple, opposite and can be purple or green tinged. Leaves have coarsely serrated (toothed) leaf margins pointed toward the tip and can be up 5 inches wide and 7 inches long. The stems of perilla mint are square in cross section, erect, hairy, somewhat branched and green or purple. The flowers are small white with a ring of

hairs in the throat and are clustered in the terminals of these plants. Reproduction is by seed.

Management Considerations:

- The best time to scout for and control perilla mint is late April to early June. Control at this time is best accomplished using a broad-leaf herbicide.

- Maintain plenty of grass and other forages for cattle to consume; don't over graze pastures.

- Mowing perilla mint plants before seed is produced will help prevent further reproduction and spread.

For more information about Perilla Mint contact your local OSU Extension Office.

---

*David Cantrell is the agriculture Extension educator for Pittsburg County. Contact him at 918-423-4120.*