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### *Melampyrum pratense*

[Synonyms : *Melampyrum alpestre*, *Melampyrum vulgatum*, *Triticum vaccinium*]

**COMMON COW-WHEAT** is a semi-parasitic annual. Native to northern temperate areas it has small, deep to pale yellow throated, red- or purple-tinged flowers.

It is also known as *Almindelig Kohvede* (Danish), *Ängskovall* (Swedish), *Baby's rattle*, *Blé de vache* (French), *Čermel' lučný* (Slovak), *Černýš luční* (Czech), *Coda di lupo* (Italian), *Coda di volpe* (Italian), *Cornette* (French), *Cow-wheat*, *Fiamma* (Italian), *Fromento di vacca* (Italian), *Gliniogai Cyffredin* (Welsh), *Grand di vacca* (Italian), *Hen-penny*, *Horse floure*, *Inek bugdayi* (Turkish), *Karamuk* (Turkish), *Kovall* (Swedish), *Kuh Wachtelweizen* (German), *Meadow cow-wheat*, *Melampiro* (Italian), *Mélampyre* (French), *Poverty weed*, *Rugeole* (French), *Wiesen-Wachtelweizen* (German), and *Yellow cow-wheat*.

The flattened capsular fruit have a small, oily swelling attractive to ants that are responsible for distributing the seeds.

Warning – the plant can be poisonous for animals and can cause their death if eaten in sufficient quantity.

*Pratense* is derived from Latin *pratium* (meadow) meaning 'of or from meadows'.

During the Middle Ages in England country people were convinced that the small seeds would transform themselves into wheat (*Triticum*) hence the common name Cow-wheat.

The seeds are used to make a black bread.

Although it is now known that the common cow-wheat in sufficient quantity can cause animals' illness and death, it used to be a fodder plant on the European continent. There it was said that the butter yield from cow's milk was increased when the animals had eaten the plant.