Mexican Feathergrass *(Nassella Tenuissima)*

REDUCING THEIR IMPACT IN THE NORTHERN AND YORKE NRM REGION

Description of this weed

Mexican feathergrass is a densely tufted perennial tussock grass growing to about 70 cm high and is similar to serrated tussock. Seed heads are 15–25 cm long, lower glume is 9–10 mm long, leaf blades to 0.5mm wide, tightly rolled and with small serrations. The leaves roll smoothly between the fingers like a needle.

The flower head is 15–25 cm long and is green or purplish. A leaf-like sheath encloses the lower section of the flower head. The flower head does not detach from the plant. This is one of the identifying features that differentiate it from serrated tussock. With serrated tussock the flower head fully projects from the leaf sheath and detaches at maturity.

The awn (bristle-like appendage) is 4.5–9cm long and is attached to the end of the seed. The seed is 2–3 mm long encased by two purple or reddish-brown, 6–10 mm long glumes. Serrated tussock awns are 2–3.5 cm, and are offset in their attachment to the seed.

Why is it a weed and what is the impact?

Mexican feathergrass is a potentially serious new weed to Australia. It is hardy, drought tolerant, unpalatable to stock and difficult to control. The species is closely related to serrated tussock, widely regarded as the worst pasture weed in Australia. Serrated tussock is estimated to cost Australia more than $50 million a year in lost productivity and weed control costs. Mexican feather grass has the potential to invade up to 14 million hectares in Australia, a far greater area than serrated tussock.

It is capable of surviving in extremely variable climates and soil types, and is able to tolerate prolonged periods of drought. Naturalised populations will be difficult to identify, as it is similar to other weedy grass species. It can cause severe environmental damage to native grasslands and invades productive pastures.

Mexican feathergrass produces many seeds which can be spread by flooding, vehicles, on clothing and on the fur of pets. The seed can remain viable for up to four years and it has been planted as an ornamental.

What can you do?

ALERT WEED

This weed is an alert weed for the Northern and Yorke region. Alert weeds are weeds that have been identified as a significant threat in the Northern and Yorke region but are not currently present. For this reason if this weed is found in the region please contact Natural Resources Northern and Yorke to notify them of its presence. They will then recommend a treatment plan.

For more information

Natural Resources Centre Northern and Yorke
155 Main North Road, Clare SA 5453
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E DEWNR.NRNY@sa.gov.au
W www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/northernandyorke
Hours Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm

Pest plants – whose responsibility?

Pest plants don't recognise property boundaries. By working collaboratively, Natural Resources Northern and Yorke and landholders have the best chance of controlling priority pest plants.

On private land:
Landholders have a legal responsibility, under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004,* to control declared plants on their land.

On roadside reserves:
Roadsides are part of public road reserves, which are owned by the Crown. Under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*, regional NRM boards are responsible for the control of declared pest plants on roadside reserves.

Landholders have the opportunity to control declared plants on road reserves adjoining their property. Where control work is undertaken by the local board, an account may be issued to landholders.

Before undertaking control work on road reserves, landholders should contact the Natural Resource Centre to determine if any approvals are required. Care should also be taken to avoid any off-target damage to native vegetation.

Natural Resources Northern and Yorke can provide the following support to landholders:

- A free weed identification service
- Advice about the most appropriate management method for pest plants on their property.