

# African lovegrass

## *Eragrostis curvula*

Photo credit: Chris Brodie

African lovegrass is a hardy, summer growing perennial grass.

It produces large, unpalatable tussocks that displace productive plants in pastures.

It is now declared under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 with prohibition on sale throughout South Australia and enforced control in the Limestone Coast.

Other common names: weeping lovegrass, boer lovegrass, curved lovegrass, catalina lovegrass

Origin: South Africa

History: African lovegrass was introduced from Africa as a pasture plant.

### Why is it a problem?

African lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*) invades dryland pasture, native vegetation and roadsides.

It is a tough perennial grass with a low nutrition value and palatability. African lovegrass (ALG) produces large amounts of seed which may outcompete higher value pasture and has the potential to form a monoculture where it is present.

ALG can be a significant fire hazard as the rank tussocks are highly combustible.



Photo credit: Chris Brodie

### How does it spread?

The grass is easily spread by stock, wind or when the seed heads are caught in the undercarriage of vehicles. It is also known to have been spread by slashing.

Remember: the best method of weed control is prevention. Ensure your machinery and vehicles are weed free.



Photo credit: Chris Brodie

### What does it look like?

ALG is a robust perennial tussock grass which can grow to 1.3m high. The leaves range from bright green to blue-green, are narrow and up to 35cm long.

Seed heads are initially purple-green, but turn straw-coloured when ripe. Seeds are straw-coloured to brown and are very small, less than 1mm.

The roots are fibrous and usually only grow to about 50cm deep into the soil.

## Planning for control

Firstly, confirm that the plant is ALG. There are other invasive weeds and native grasses which could look similar. Check with your local Landscape Officer. They will also be able to assist with advice on control options. All control measures should be carried out before seed heads develop.

Treat the infestation as early as possible. Do not slash when the plant is seeding - this will spread the weed. If the infestation is not discovered until it is seeding, do not drive through the area except to treat the weed. Then use strict vehicle hygiene protocols to reduce the possibility of spread.

Monitor stock movement. If you have found ALG in a paddock that stock have been grazing in, contain stock for at least 10 days to empty out before moving them to a different paddock.

ALG will not disappear after one treatment. Be prepared for ongoing and persistent control until the seed bank is eliminated. For best results, use integrated management (including vigorous pasture establishment and pasture maintenance) to out-complete this plant.

## Implementing control on property

Each infestation may call for different treatments so assess each situation to develop the best strategy. Have a goal for the site - what would you prefer to do with the land that the ALG currently occupies?

Isolated clumps of ALG can be spot sprayed with herbicides. Avoid grubbing out unless the area will be closely monitored, as root fragments may be left behind. These will likely keep growing and you will have to be vigilant in following up control.

For dense patches, there are a number of options to assist in developing an integrated control program:

- Summer - heavily graze (before seed heads develop) to restrict the mass prior to treating with herbicide. Applying nitrogen fertiliser can improve palatability.
- Summer to Autumn - spray with herbicide when the plant is actively growing.
- Autumn or mid-Spring - defoliate using a variety of options including herbicide or fire before treating with herbicide (ensure all other state and CFS considerations are taken into account when using fire).

With your end goal in mind, add the logistics to your plan. If you want to aim for a vigorous pasture or crop, plan the materials, equipment and timing for this to happen. If it is native vegetation, ensure that you will still be able to treat the ALG while establishing the area. Planning, persistence and integrated management will assist in a successful control program.

## Implementing control on roadsides

A regional landscape board may carry out control of pest plants and animals on roadsides and invoice the adjoining landholder. Adjoining landholders may prefer to undertake the treatment themselves. In doing so they must contact their local council (or responsible authority) for approval. Landholders must take all reasonable steps to ensure native vegetation is protected.

Aim to contain the infestation, reduce spread and eliminate the threat.

## Herbicide options

Two herbicides registered for control of ALG are Glyphosate (eg. Roundup) and Flupropanate (eg. Taskforce, Tussock).

Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide that is absorbed through a plant's leaves. It is most effective if applied in early summer after defoliation and fresh green growth has occurred. Surfactant is recommended to penetrate the grass for better herbicide uptake (eg. Nu Farm LI 700).

Flupropanate is a selective, residual herbicide that is primarily absorbed via the plant's roots. It may take up to 3 months before signs of treatments are visible, and up to 18 months before the plant is dead. Flupropanate can be residual from 1 - 2 years.

Flupropanate has withholding periods before the area can be grazed or cut for stock food: 14 days if spot sprayed and 4 months if boom sprayed. Flupropanate can be applied just before the active growing season (late spring) to just before first frosts in autumn. Poor results have occurred when applied in dry winters or droughts.

Important: Always read the product label before undertaking herbicide application.

## For more information

Contact your local Landscape Officer at  
Limestone Coast Landscape Board  
Mount Gambier Office: 8735 1177  
Keith Office: 8755 1620  
[www.landscape.sa.gov.au/lc](http://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/lc)

Further weed control information is also available at: [www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity)

Information courtesy of Biosecurity SA

# Registered Herbicide rates - APVMA Permit PER9729

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Method of application	Flupropanate	Glyphosate 360	Glyphosate 450 with adjuvant	Glyphosate 540	Critical use comments
Broadacre control	1.5 – 3 L / ha	6L / ha	4.8L / ha	4L / ha	
Double knockdown/split application		3L / ha + 3L / ha	2.4L / ha + 2.4L / ha	2L / ha + 2L / ha	Rates: One treatment followed later by another knockdown treatment such as herbicide or tillage. See critical comments for glyphosate.
Spot spray treatment	150 – 300mL / 100L water	1L / 100L water	800mL / 100L water	660 mL / 100L water	
Wiper suppression	500mL / 10L water	3.3L / 10L water	2.6L / 10L water	2.2L / 10L water	
Broadacre control - seed check mixture or seed set suppression	1.5 – 3L / ha	380 - 630mL / ha	300-500mL / ha	250-420mL / ha	Use only in situations listed for both herbicides. Apply glyphosate alone for seed set suppression. Mix flupropanate with glyphosate for control. Use higher glyphosate rate during late seed development or if the weed is dense.
Spot spray control - seed check mix or seed set suppression	150 - 300mL / 100L water	335mL / 100mL water	270mL / 100L water	225mL / 100L water	Use only in situations listed for both herbicides. Apply glyphosate alone for seed set suppression. Mix flupropanate with glyphosate for control.

Surfactant is recommended to penetrate the grass for better herbicide uptake (eg. Nu Farm LI 700). Abide by withholding periods as directed on herbicide labels.

### For more information on African Lovegrass control:

Contact your local Landscape Officer at Mount Gambier Office: 8735 1177 or Keith Office: 8755 1620

[www.landscape.sa.gov.au/lc](http://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/lc)