Mexican feather grass

Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*) is a densely tufted perennial tussock grass growing to about 70cm high. The leaves roll smoothly between the fingers like a needle.

What does it look like?

Seed heads are 15–25cm long and the leaf blades are up to 0.5mm wide, tightly rolled and with small serrations.

The flower head is 15–25cm 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.

What is its impact?

Mexican feather grass 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 feather grass 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?

Finding and destroying the plants before they naturalise and spread elsewhere is the key to

preventing the establishment of Mexican feather grass within the region.

It is important that any infestations are detected early when they are small and are easier to destroy. Check the identity of any new or unusual grass plants on your property or in your area as soon as you become aware of them.

Mexican feather grass should be controlled prior to seed where possible. If plants have been allowed to seed, then ongoing control of germinating seedlings may be required for a number of years.

Chemical

For advice on chemical control techniques, contact the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board. Please refer to the *Weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia*. You can find it on PIRSA's website at: www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity

What are your responsibilities?

Mexican feather grass is a declared plant under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*. Landholders must control the plant on their property. Sale or movement of plants or goods containing plants or plant parts is prohibited within the state.

More information

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