

African Feathergrass

Pennisetum macrourum

**Total Control Plant under the
West Coast Regional Pest Plant
Management Strategy**



Suspected sightings of this Total Control Plant should be reported promptly to the West Coast Regional Council

National Pest Plant Accord Status

African Feathergrass is listed in the 2008 National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) and is banned from sale, propagation and distribution in New Zealand. For more information refer to the MAF Biosecurity New Zealand website at www.biosecurity.govt.nz/nppa

Where has African Feathergrass come from?

African Feathergrass was introduced to New Zealand in the early 1900's, initially as a soil binder, then later as an ornamental grass because of its distinct flower heads.

What does African Feathergrass look like?

African Feathergrass grows into a large perennial up to two metres tall. It has a large rhizomous root system and forms dense stands in damp, open areas where it can tolerate a wide range of conditions.

The plant can be distinguished from other similar looking grasses such as Pampas Grass and Toetoe, by the fine, rough edged leaves with their cutting edges, and the 2m long stalk plant stalks which are topped with 30cm, narrow, bristly either yellow, brown or purplish flower heads (Pampas and Toetoe have more feathery flower heads).

Why is African Feathergrass a Pest Plant?

African Feathergrass is a pest plant because it is unpalatable to stock and spreads easily by seed or rhizome forming large dense stands which are difficult to get rid of. The rhizomous root system can also completely suppress lower growing plants and pasture grasses, harbour pest animals (rats, stoats), block drains, and impair efficient use of farm machinery. African Feathergrass is listed on the National Pest Plant Accord.



African feather grass flower head

*Top right: African Feathergrass in full growth. [EBOP]
Above: flower head detail [MAF/BNZ]*

What are the best methods of control?

Recommended Overall Approach

Spray annually to eradicate small isolated areas. Contain and reduce larger areas. Aim to contain and prevent further spread short term, and eradicate long term.

Manual Methods

Grazing is not an option as African Feathergrass is unpalatable to stock. Other options are:

- Cut off the seed heads and burn them to prevent existing plants spreading further.
- Dig out isolated plants, then dry and burn them or dispose in a lined landfill.

NOTE: any rhizomes left behind will re-grow so care must be taken to dig them all out.

Herbicide Methods

Make choices from the following options as per number and density of plants:

- Slash tall stands first then spray regrowth.
- Spray dense sites (initial rate 150ml glyphosate + 20ml penetrant/10L)
- For mature plants increase to 200ml glyphosate or use 150ml haloxyfop/10L), spring-autumn
- Follow up, spray scattered plants (haloxyfop 150ml/10L).

For personal safety please use all herbicides as per manufacturer's labelling

Biocontrols

There are no known biocontrol agents for African Feathergrass known at present.

Where can I get more help?

For further information call either of the Regional Weedbusters Co-ordinators. They are:

Mary Traves: Environmental Information Officer, West Coast Regional Council (768 0466 or 0508 800 118)

Tom Belton: Technical Support Officer Biosecurity & Weeds, Department of Conservation, West Coast - Tai Poutini Conservancy, Hokitika (03 756 9100)



www.weedbusters.org.nz

The West Coast Regional Council does not accept liability for any advice given on this sheet regarding application of herbicides for pest plant control. The brand names listed imply neither endorsement of those brands, nor criticism of any other brands not listed.