

African Lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*)

July 2017



Image credit: Dana Miles

African Lovegrass can form dense infestations

African Lovegrass is a hardy, perennial grass that invades pasture and native vegetation. It is a declared weed under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* (NRM Act).

Description

African Lovegrass forms large perennial tussocks that grow to between 30 and 120 cm high.

Leaves are up to 30 cm long and narrow (3 mm wide) with rolled margins. Leaf colour varies from dark green to blue-green.

The flower stems are slender, erect and sometimes bent at the nodes. The flower heads form a spreading panicle 6 to 30 cm long with a grey-green colour.

Ripe seed is present from January to March. Seeds germinate in autumn or spring.

Impacts

African Lovegrass produces large, unpalatable tussocks that displace productive plants in pastures. If unchecked, it can spread and form pure, dense infestations.

Young plants are nutritious and are readily grazed. Plants become unpalatable, and are avoided by stock, as they mature.

Sparse, overgrazed pastures are most at risk.

African Lovegrass is a threat to high value pastures on the Fleurieu Peninsula with significant infestations at Parawa, Waitpinga, Mount Compass, Cape Jervis and Maslins.

Distribution

African Lovegrass was introduced from east Africa as a pasture plant and is widely distributed in Australia. It prefers acidic sands and sandy-loam soils in the 400 to 700 mm annual rainfall belt.

In South Australia, African Lovegrass is mainly restricted to the sides of major highways in the mallee regions. It is present in roadsides of the Mount Lofty Ranges and particularly the Fleurieu Peninsula where there are significant infestations near Mount Compass.

Seeds can be spread short distances by wind, and also by animals, machinery and vehicles and in hay.

Dispersal by machinery, animals and water are important in establishing new infestations.



Government of
South Australia



Natural Resources
Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges



Image credit: Dana Miles Upright tussock typical of African Lovegrass

Hygiene practices

There are a number of hygiene practices that can help prevent the spread of African Lovegrass:

- avoid working in infested areas (except for control work)
- undertake control work prior to seed set
- do not remove seeds/plants from infested areas
- decontaminate stock prior to moving
- do not buy/sell contaminated fodder.

To prevent the spread of seed, thoroughly brush down equipment, people (boots etc.), machinery and vehicles when leaving an infested area.

Control methods

Young African Lovegrass plants cannot compete with established, well-managed pasture.

Small infestations can be controlled by chipping or spot spraying. Soil disturbance should be minimised to avoid creating opportunities for African Lovegrass invasion.

For advice on chemical control techniques contact your nearest Natural Resources Centre. Please refer to the *Weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia* for advice on chemical control. You can find it on Biosecurity SA's website at www.pir.sa.gov.au

What to do

African Lovegrass is easily confused with other tussock-like grasses such as Poa Tussock (*Poa labillardieri*). The identity of possible infestations should be confirmed before control measures are taken.

If you suspect that you have African Lovegrass on your land, place a sample of the seed head in a sealed bag and take it to your nearest Natural Resources Centre or local council office for identification.

This is a free service and they will also provide you with information on current control techniques.

Declarations

The following sections of the NRM Act apply to African Lovegrass in the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region:

- 175 (2) Cannot transport the plant, or any material or equipment containing that plant, on a public road**
- 177 (1) Cannot sell the plant**
- 177 (2) Cannot sell any produce / goods carrying the plant**
- 182 (2) Landowner must control the plant on their land**
- 185 (1) NRM authority may recover costs for control of weeds on roadsides from adjoining landowners.**

More information

Please contact your local Natural Resources Centre for further information, advice and assistance in controlling African Lovegrass.

Black Hill

115 Maryvale Road, Athelstone 5076
T: 08 8336 0901

Gawler

8 Adelaide Road, Gawler South 5118
T: 08 8523 7700

Willunga

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