

Coolatai grass (*Hyparrhenia hirta*)

February 2015



Coolatai grass flower heads
Credit: S Clarke



Coolatai grass clump



Seed head and vase-shaped plant

Coolatai grass was introduced to the Adelaide region approximately in the 1990s. It is a declared weed under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* (NRM Act).

Description

The most distinguishing features of Coolatai grass include densely tufted, tussock-forming, perennial grass which grows to between 1 and 2 metres high. It has thin grey-green leaves 10 cm to 30 cm long and 1 mm to 5 mm wide and flowers mostly in spring and summer.

Young plants may appear similar to the following native species:

- Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*)
- Lemon grass (*Cymbopogon amgiguos*)
- Red-leg grass (*Bothriochloa macra*).

Impacts

Coolatai grass impacts on biodiversity by outcompeting and replacing native plants, preventing regeneration of native plants and reducing available fauna habitat.

Coolatai grass creates a fire hazard by producing large amounts of dry material that can generate into a large fuel load.

It impacts upon grazing by dominating those paddocks which are not intensively grazed or managed, and tall plants becoming rank and unpalatable to stock.

Distribution

Within northern Adelaide, Coolatai grass has now invaded large areas of council reserves, roadsides, former grazing land and parks/bushland.

Populations have also occurred in:

- Fleurieu Peninsula
- Port Pirie region
- Eyre Peninsula
- Upper South East
- parts of the Adelaide Hills
- Riverland region
- Freeling.

Invasiveness

Coolatai grass is a highly successful and invasive introduced species due to:

- successful germination and growth at a wide temperature range
- a rapid colonisation rate
- tolerance of a range of soil types
- an ability to persist under heavy grazing
- a capacity to produce vast quantities of seed.

Hygiene practices

There are a number of hygiene practices that can help prevent/restrict the spread of Coolatai grass.

- avoid working in infested areas (except for control work)
- undertake control work prior to seed set
- start work in uninfested areas then work toward infested areas
- do not remove seeds / plant 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.

What is being done

The Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board has undertaken a Pest Plant Risk Assessment which shows that action should be taken to destroy infestations of Coolatai grass where possible.

Natural Resources staff in conjunction with the cities of Salisbury, Playford and Tea Tree Gully, SA Water and Boral Resources (SA) Ltd have developed a cooperative approach to manage the main infestation area of Coolatai grass in the northern suburbs hills face area. This approach aims to prevent the further spread of Coolatai grass and to reduce the infestation.

The aim for other smaller infestation within the region is to destroy them.

What to do

If you suspect that you have Coolatai grass on your land, place a sample of the grass 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.

Control methods

Mechanical

Hand weeding/chipping – suitable for isolated plants or small patches (if seeding, remove plant/s in sealed containers).

Chemical

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/biosecuritysa

Declarations

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

175 (2) Cannot transport the plant or anything with the plant in it

177 (1) Cannot sell the plant
(2) Cannot sell any produce/goods carrying the plant

180 (1) Owner must identify NRM authority of plants present on their land

(2) NRM authority must notify Chief Officer
(3) Chief Officer must notify NRM authority

182 (2) Land owner must control the plant on their land

185 NRM authority may recover costs for control of weeds on roadsides from adjoining land owners

More information

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

Gawler

8 Adelaide Road, Gawler South 5118

T: 08 8523 7700

Lobethal

1 Adelaide Lobethal Road, Lobethal 5241

T: 08 8389 5900

Willunga

5 Aldinga Road, Willunga 5172

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