



WEED IDENTIFICATION NOTES



Coolatai Grass flower heads
Photo: S Clarke

Coolatai Grass (*Hyparrhenia hirta*) is a serious environmental weed.

Description

The most distinguishing features of Coolatai Grass include:

- densely tufted, tussock-forming, perennial grass
- grows to between 1 and 2 metres high
- thin grey-green leaves 10-30cm long, 1-5mm 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 amgiguous*)
- Red-leg Grass (*Bothriochloa*).

Impacts of Invasion

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 creating a large fuel load.

Coolatai Grass impacts upon grazing by:

- dominating those paddocks which are not intensively grazed or managed, and
- tall plants becoming rank and unpalatable to stock.

Distribution

Coolatai Grass was introduced to the Adelaide region approximately 12 years ago. Within northern Adelaide, Coolatai Grass has now invaded large areas of:

- Council reserves
- roadsides
- former grazing land, and
- parks/bushland.

Infestations have also spread further to:

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

Invasiveness of Coolatai Grass

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, and
- a capacity to produce vast quantities of seed.



Coolatai Grass plant





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

Growing concern regarding the invasiveness of Coolatai Grass and its implications led to the formation of the Coolatai Grass Steering Committee in 2003. This committee has representatives from:

- Local Government (City of Salisbury, City of Playford, City of Tea Tree Gully)
- Boral Resources (SA) Ltd
- SA Water
- Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board
- National Parks and Wildlife South Australia, and
- Urban Forest Biodiversity Program.

A major priority of the committee was to develop a management plan for Coolatai Grass within the northern Adelaide region.

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 contacts listed for advice on chemical control.

What To Do if you Suspect you have Coolatai Grass

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 regional NRM Board or local Council office for identification.

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



Dense stand of Coolatai Grass plants

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Contacts

Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board

Willunga

Telephone 8556 4500

Lobethal

Telephone 8389 6166

Salisbury

Telephone 8285 2033

Eastwood

Telephone 8273 9100

reception@adelaide.nrm.sa.gov.au

www.amlrnrm.sa.gov.au

