# HUME CITY COUNCIL Serrated Tussock

# Weed Management Guidelines



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# HUME CITY COUNCIL WEEDS of Hume

## Serrated Tussock

Nassella trichotoma



# Method of reproduction and dispersal

Serrated Tussock is largely self-pollinating and relies on the wind to disperse its seeds, allowing it to create colonies well away from the parent plants often kilometres away.

Other ways it can spread include contaminated stockfeed, poor vehicle or machinery hygiene and on the feet or fur of animals

#### **Quick facts**

- Has a long-lived seed that can germinate up to 15 years after dropping.
- Often pops up after disturbance situations like drainage or fence construction because of contaminated equipment.
- Causes "seed storms" which have been known to block the doorway to a house or engulf a farm shed following a period of strong winds.
- Declared Noxious weed and is a "WONS" weed (Weed of National Significance) this largely because of its ability to kill some grazing animals and its high level of invasiveness and threat to agriculture.

#### Identification

Serrated Tussock is a member of the Nassella genus of grasses and as with most grasses can be difficult to identify. The name gives you an idea about how to identify it, the leaves are quite fine and have "serrated" edges that when you run your fingers down the leaf blades tend to grab your fingers. As the name also suggests it is a Tussock which means it is presents in the form of a single clumping plant that is half spherical in form, growing up to around 800mm in diameter.

Correct identification is important, there are native grasses that are similar in appearance such as Common Tussock-grass (*Poa labillarderei*) and Red-anther Wallaby-grass (*Rytidosperma pallidum*). Council can assist landowners with identification.

#### Leaves

When Serrated Tussock is in an active growth period the leaves are typically a straw-green colour. They are tightly rolled so they appear to be somewhat like a strand of hair.

When seeding has finished and the soil starts to dry out over Summer, they can take on a more golden appearance as some outer leaves may die off particularly in dryer Summers.

Serrated tussock has a distinctive ligule which is rounded, white, membranous and hairless. It grows 0.5 to 1mm long and protrudes vertically at the junction of the leaf blade and the leaf sheath and is continuous with sheath margins.

#### Flowers

Serrated Tussock produces a very fine open seed head that appears like a mist from a distance. The seed heads are often larger than the plant itself and can flop over when the seeds are approaching maturity.

It has a many branched fine stem that contains several small seeds. Because these the stems and seeds are so light the travel readily on the wind and can form dense piles against fences and other infrastructure.

#### Seeds

The seeds are very small and are enclosed in two reddish-brown or purple bracts (glumes) which are 6 to 10mm long and which taper to a point. The seeds are 2-3mm in length for the seed itself and 20-35mm for the awn (or tail) which is attached off-centre.

#### Roots

Being a perennial tussock it has a fibrous and deep root system, usually at least as deep as the height of the grass or deeper for long established Tussocks.



- Ensure any machinery bought onto the property is pressure washed and check for areas where seed may be present like radiators.
- Keep an eye on your pasture for outbreaks, it could blow in at any time.

#### **Manual Removal**

Dig out and bag small infestations and try to avoid doing this during seed fall.

#### Chemical

A choice of method will depend on the size of the infestation and the terrain of the property.

Moderate infestations are often spot sprayed with knapsack, larger infestations are either boom sprayed or rig sprayed. Increasingly drone technology is being used as it offers accuracy and removes the access issues of terrestrial techniques.

All methods have to take in consideration current land use, damage to desirable species and long-term replacement strategies.

There are several On-label herbicides for Serrated Tussock, Glyphosate and Flupropanate are widely used by land managers.

#### Long Term Control

A well-integrated management plan is critical to achieve control of Serrated Tussock.

If the infestation is large, a replacement strategy will be important to fill the void left by the removal of the weed. Consider sowing native grasses in a bushland situation and sowing pasture grass for a grazing situation. A typical timeline could be up to 10 years, with ongoing monitoring beyond that.

For smaller infestations, digilant control that allows for other species to populate the space is key. Ensuring control happens annually and well before seed set will see a fast reduction in the weed within a few years.

#### **Environmental and Agricultural Impacts**

Serrated Tussock has been a big contributor to the degradation of Victoria's critically endangered grasslands.

Agriculture, particularly in Western parts of Victoria has been severely impacted. The species is highly competitive and because most ruminants initially avoid Serrated Tussock, it takes over pastures forming a monoculture.

Sheep and Cattle can die from blocked intestines caused by the leaves of Serrated Tussock. Typically, poorly managed pasture or a lack of available feed are reasons for ruminants to graze Serrated Tussock.

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| Flowering   | • |   | • | • | • |   |   | • | • | • | • | • |
| Seeding     | • | • | • | • |   |   |   |   |   | • | • | • |
| Germination | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| Treatment   |   | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |   |   |

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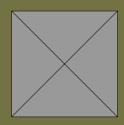
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