



Government
of South Australia

WEED IDENTIFICATION NOTES

ANIMAL AND PLANT CONTROL COMMISSION

AFRICAN LOVEGRASS



African lovegrass with flowering and 3 seeding panicles



Closeup of flowering panicles



Dense African lovegrass infestation

AFRICAN LOVEGRASS



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African lovegrass, *Eragrostis curvula*, is a perennial tussock grass, introduced from southern Africa as a pasture plant. It competes very effectively with other grasses, annuals and perennials, and can form dense pure stands excluding other species. Because of its high seed production, high germination rate and the difficulty of controlling it by herbicides or management practices, it is important to keep African lovegrass off clean properties or to recognise and destroy new infestations before they become established.

Distribution

Eyre Peninsula	- isolated patches
Northern pastoral	- isolated plants on roadsides
Northern ag districts / Yorke Peninsula	- common on roadsides, isolated in conservation parks
Murray Mallee	- isolated patches and roadsides
South East	- scattered along roadsides in upper south east
Central region	- isolated patches on roadsides

Impacts

African lovegrass is very invasive in pasture due to its high reproductive rate and low unpalatability for stock when mature. Its rapid rate of spread during summer and dense tussock form result in sparse pastures being overtaken by this weedy grass.

However, one palatable cultivar, 'Consol', has been registered as a fodder plant and is being used for grazing and as a soil binding plant in areas suffering soil erosion.

Recognition

African lovegrass is a perennial grass forming dense tussocks 30 - 120 cm high. The root system is shallow and fibrous. Leaves are dark green to blue green and rough to touch, to 30 cm long and 3 mm wide. The sheath at the base of each leaf is smooth and there is a ring of hairs at the opening of the sheath.

The flowering stems are slender and arching, ending in loose, finely branched panicles 10 - 30 cm long. The panicle branches are very slender and drooping, bearing separate grey-green spikelets 4 - 10 mm long. The spikelets break up to release 4 - 13 ripe seeds, which are about 1 mm long and cream to brown in colour when ripe.

Biology

African lovegrass is most abundant on open grasslands on light sandy soils. It is a good invader of disturbed areas such as roadsides, and tolerates moderately saline or sodic soils.

Seeds germinate in autumn or spring as long as the moisture levels and temperatures are suitable. Seedlings grow slowly in the early stages but growth accelerates after the five-leaf stage. Plants cease growth during winter, but are frost hardy; they reshoot when temperatures rise in spring. In southern parts of the State, flowering begins in December and ripe seeds are present from January to March. New stems and flowers may be produced all year round, as long as water is available, in warmer areas.

African lovegrass reproduces only by seed. This is normally produced without cross pollination, so there is little variation within a population of African lovegrass. Seed is spread by contaminated produce, soil and machinery, and over shorter distances by wind and water.

Further Information:

Lazarides, M. (1998) A revision of *Eragrostis* in Australia. *Australian Systematic Botany* 10: 11-187.

Parsons, W.T. & Cuthbertson, E.G. (2000). *Noxious Weeds of Australia*. 2nd edn. Inkata Press.

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For more advice on recognising and controlling African lovegrass, contact your local Animal and Plant Control Board:



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