

African Feather Grass

(*Pennisetum macrourum*)

Is African Feather Grass on your property?

African Feather Grass is included in Horizons Regional Pest Plant Management Strategy as a Zero Density Plant. All infestations will be controlled to Zero-density as and when they are found. Zero-Density means the control of the pest plant to the last individual. Pest plant species that are limited in distribution will fall under this objective. If you see any sites of this plant, please contact us on free phone 0508 800 800



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Identification

Perennial clump-forming grass with deep fibrous roots. Rhizomes 7-mm diameter can reach 2m and form new aerial shoots and roots. Leaves light green, strongly ribbed dark green underneath. The tough, round, purplish-white stems to 2m tall have many fine hairs which break off when touched causing skin irritations. Flower head is a narrow cylindrical spike 10-30 cm long, containing many seeds.

Weedy characteristics

Rhizomes create dense spreading masses. Seeds prolifically and thrives in a vast range of soils. Prefers damp conditions, but is drought resistant. Very tolerant of heat, cold, wind, salt damage and grazing. Long-lived and tops most low-growing species in an open site.

Methods of dispersal

Creeping rhizomes and fragments from disturbance. Seeds spread by water, clothing and animals. Flower heads often used in flower arrangement especially in cemeteries.

Impact on indigenous plants

Outgrows native species destroying ecosystems. Invades established plant communities including those on sand. Can cause destruction of wetlands and dune lakes. Harbours rats, mice and possums.

Typical habitats

Bare land, dune lakes, estuaries, coastal and river habitats, wetlands and low scrubland. Potentially throughout New Zealand.

Control

1. Dig out only very small infestations. Dispose of roots and rhizomes.
2. Spray dense sites with glyphosate 1.5% + penetrant. Spring-autumn. Tall stands can be slashed and new growth sprayed to increase effect. Cut and collect seed heads if possible.
3. Spray most sites and all re-growth with Gallant at label rates, Spring-autumn. Cut and collect seed heads if possible.

Site management

Unpalatable to stock – do not graze to control. Do not treat when in seed and beware of fire after spraying. Follow-up spray at least 6-monthly until re-growth ceases. Do not replant with grasses for 2 years after initial spray. Where possible replant with broad-leaved species to allow follow-up spray with Gallant.

Species recovery

Rhizomes re-sprout strongly. Seeds on bare sites.

For more information freephone 0508 800 800.

