

# Hunter Region Priority Weed

# Giant rat's tail grass

Reduces productivity of pastures  
and stock health



*Photo: H. Rose*

Management guide



In NSW, weeds are regulated by the *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015*. All land managers have a General Biosecurity Duty (GBD) to contain the spread of weeds.

**“General Biosecurity Duty means that any person dealing with plant matter must take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the biosecurity risk (as far as is reasonably practicable).”**

The Regional priority for Giant rat’s tail grass is to eradicate the weed. In order to achieve this Land Managers are asked to: Mitigate the risk of new weeds being introduced to their land. The plant should be eradicated from the land and the land kept free of the plant. The plant should not be bought, sold, grown, carried or released into the environment. Notify local control authority if found.

For further information contact your local Weeds Officer via **[Hunter Regional Weeds](#)** or visit **[NSW WeedWise](#)**.

## Impacts

Giant rat’s tail grass is a serious pasture weed in the eastern parts of the Hunter Region

- Giant rat’s tail grass is an aggressive perennial tussock grass.
- Invades pastures and reduces productivity by outcompeting more productive grasses.
- Affects stock management and productivity - weaning and finishing weights, doubling time for weight gain in cattle.
- Can loosen teeth in cattle grazing it.
- Low palatability.
- Especially invasive after overgrazing, soil disturbance or fire.
- Very hardy. Prefers poorer soils.
- Grows to 1.7 m when flowering.
- Seeds become sticky in wet or with morning dew.
- Giant rat’s tail grass produces a large amount of seed, up to 8,500 per square metre.
- Seed can remain viable for up to 10 years.
- Seed can be dispersed by water and wind; and by domestic, feral and native animals’ manure, fur and feet. Also spread by people and machinery, hay and pasture seed.
- Farm management practices, such as slashing, can spread it too.

## Management

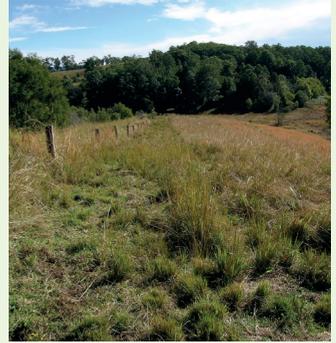
- To eradicate the plant a continuous program of control (to suppress and destroy all plants) must be implemented.
- Maintain good farm biosecurity practices to prevent spread of seed to clean areas. This may include a wash down area for vehicle and machinery moving onto and off your land.
- Quarantine new stock on arrival and monitor area for seedlings.
- Take care when purchasing stock feeds to not introduce material containing seeds.
- Ensure good pasture management to limit bare soil and to maintain good ground cover.
- Practice good farm biosecurity WITHIN your property. Do not drive through infested areas. Keep roadways, laneways, stock routes and machinery corridors free of rat’s tail grass.
- Muster only in the afternoon when plants and seeds are dry. Do not muster in the wet.
- Restrict cattle to a small paddock or a laneway (on hay) for five days after grazing the rat’s tail grass paddock.
- Muster on foot or on horseback to prevent seed contamination of machinery.
- Maintain a buffer zone around infested areas.

# Identification



Forms a large, dense, tussock to 1.7 m tall. Stem are tough, and their bases are strongly flattened. Leaves are hairless, tough and up to 7 mm wide.

*Photo: H Rose*



A native of Africa, it is an invasive weed of disturbed land and pastures, mainly on low fertility soils. *Photo: H Rose*



Fully mature flowering head showing pyramidal structure. *Photo: H Rose*



Branches open at maturity to form a pyramidal open panicle. *Photo: H Rose*

Flowerheads are initially long (20-45 cm) and narrow, resembling a rat's tail. *Photo: H Rose*

# Management Calendar

The calendar below outlines the management approach for a typical year.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Growth stage	Seed set throughout frost free times.								Seed set throughout frost free times.			
	Germination at any time with good moisture and soil temperature.											
	Active growth and flowering.								Active growth and flowering.			
Action	Maintain good ground cover. Implement property biosecurity measures.											
	Best time for herbicide control.									Best time for herbicide control.		

Recommended control options may vary according to your area. There are experienced professional Weeds Officers based in each Local Government Area who have local knowledge and can provide expert advice for your weed management situation. Contact your expert Weeds Officer at your local Council or at Hunter Regional Weeds.

Herbicide control options for all areas in NSW, including current herbicide registrations, are available for Giant rat's tail grass at <http://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Details/59>.

*Remember that all herbicide must be used and handled in accordance with the label or permit.*

<https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/GiantRatsTailGrass>



Get the WeedWise app

## Further information

For further information on how to meet your General Biosecurity Duty on your property, your best source is the expert Weeds Officer at your local Council or via Hunter Regional Weeds.

**Contact Hunter Regional Weeds**

[www.hunterregionalweeds.net.au](http://www.hunterregionalweeds.net.au)

**Hunter Local Land Services**

[www.hunter.lls.nsw.gov.au](http://www.hunter.lls.nsw.gov.au)

**NSW Weed Wise**

[www.weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au)

