

PLANT PEST CONTROL

LAND PLANT PESTS

Nut Grass: *Cyperus rotundus*

Why are we worried?

Nut Grass is one of the world's worst weeds. It is an extremely aggressive sedge. In cropping land it develops a thick mat, out competing the cultivated crop, whether it be tall growing maize or spiky asparagus. Currently there is no chemical means of control.

Mechanical cleaning is extremely difficult, so the only effective control is to prevent the plant from becoming established. This can only be done through effective hygiene procedures. The rhizomes can grow through potato tubers and carrots, and make harvesting of root crops difficult.

What does it look like?

- Nut Grass is a perennial sedge with distinctive smooth, dark green leaves up to 20cm long.
- The flower head grows from 10 to 60cm high as a three sided upright stem and is red to purple-brown.
- Flowers occur from mid-January to March.

- The distinguishing feature of Nut Grass is its extensive underground root system of rhizomes and tubers. Thin rhizomes produce tubers at five to 25cm intervals up to 30cm from below the surface.
- The tubers which can be up to two cm in diameter are irregular to nearly round and brown to black when mature.
- The tubers are very prolific, for instance at one site in Matamata the underground volume was weighed at 14 tonnes/ha dry weight.
- Chemicals only appear to kill the first tuber and connecting rhizome, leaving the remainder to continue growing.



Where is it found?

Nut Grass is present in the Heretaunga Plains and is causing concern among growers but its distribution and density of infestation is not yet clear. Distribution in other areas of Hawke's Bay is unknown.

What's the best way to control this plant?

Currently the only effective method of control is good hygiene. Growers need to check all equipment before it enters their property. Ensure all equipment is washed and clean before leaving or entering any property – Contractors need to be particularly careful. On properties where Nut Grass is growing, cultivation should start from the areas least infested and work towards the more densely infested areas. This will reduce the risk of spread into less infested areas.

The need to ensure that machinery is cleaned and inspected before it enters your property cannot be over-emphasised. This is the ONLY effective method of control available at present.

Trials are being undertaken by AgResearch into chemical controls but it is likely to be some time before an effective control is available.

Under pasture Nut Grass does not appear to be a problem, but how long it will last under a closely grazed pastoral system is unknown.

For further information

If you think you may have this plant pest on your property, please contact the Biosecurity Plants Officers at Hawke's Bay Regional Council for advice and we will work with you to eradicate it.

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