

PLANT PEST CONTROL

LAND PLANT PESTS

Wild Oat: *Avena fatua*

Why are we worried?

Wild Oat can be a major problem in cropping land. Infestations of Wild Oat can reduce the yield of wheat, barley, linseed and pea crops by as much as two-thirds. Control measures can add significantly to the cost of production. Cereal crops will be rejected for certification and ryegrass, cocksfoot and prairie grass lines downgraded if Wild Oat is found during field inspections. The seed can remain viable in the soil for up to 20 years and is extremely difficult to dress out.

What does it look like?

- Wild Oat looks like a narrow-leaved variety of cultivated oat. From December on if an oat-like plant emerges above the crop it is likely to be Wild Oat.
- The abscission scar and hairs are the most reliable features for identifying Wild Oat from its seeds. The seeds have a long awn (bristle) which becomes twisted spirally when the grain is ripe. There are tufts of hair at the base of the seed and at the base of the awn. When ripe, the seeds separate from the husks by means of a special abscission layer which shows as a horseshoe shaped scar at the base of the seed. The seeds are also usually less plump than cultivated oats.
- There are a variety of seed colours, with dark brown most common, and cream and grey.
- In seedlings the first leaves are usually narrower and less robust than

in cultivated cereals, and have an anti-clockwise twist, while wheat and barley twist clockwise.

Where is it found?

Wild Oat is found mainly in areas of heavy cropping throughout the Region.

What's the best way to control the plant?

Plants usually outgrow the surrounding plants, so when there are only a few plants, the most effective control measure is hand pulling. Plants must be removed completely and destroyed before the seed is ripe enough to shatter. Where there are too many plants to pull by hand, chemical roguing can be used and applied with chemical gloves.



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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TOLL FREE	0800 108 838