

AUSTRALIAN SEDGE

Carex longebrachiata

Why is it a pest?

Australian sedge forms dense tussock infestations 30cm-90cm high in pasture areas. It is unpalatable to stock and reduces farm production by crowding out pasture. In open grassland areas, Australian sedge is also a threat to native species as it competes with seedlings.

It establishes and spreads most rapidly on disturbed and exposed soil where pasture doesn't thrive due to low soil fertility, drought, overgrazing or insect damage.

Australian sedge produces many seeds, which remain viable for three to five years. Once established, it can spread rapidly throughout the farm via livestock. The seed is quite heavy and most falls within 30cm of the plant. This creates an ever-increasing 'mattress' of Australian sedge.

How can I control Australian sedge?

Physical control

- Grubbing should only be used to deal with scattered isolated plants. It is a costly and ineffective method of control for large infestations. Breaking up the plant encourages seeds to germinate and the ground becomes reinfested. Australian sedge will regenerate from fragments, so all root stock must be collected and disposed of. It is necessary to recheck the site regularly for seedlings and regrowth.

Herbicide control

- Glyphosate is an effective herbicide against Australian sedge. The area should be checked and resprayed each year to kill new seedlings and regrowth. The optimum time for spraying is November through to March. The best protection against reinfestation from seed still in the soil is a dense pasture cover.

More information

For additional information and advice on Australian sedge, call our pest plant staff on freephone 0800 800 401.

Publications

The following publications are available from the Waikato Regional Council. Contact us to request a copy (freephone 0800 800 401).

- National Pest Plant Accord (Manual of plants banned from sale, propagation and distribution) (free)
- Plant Me Instead! (Plants to use in place of pest plants) (free)

Web

- *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032* – waikatoregion.govt.nz/RPMP
- *Waikato Biosecurity Strategy 2022-2032* – waikatoregion.govt.nz/biosecurity-strategy



What does it look like?

Australian sedge is distinguished from other carex species by its distinctive flower/seed head, and the fact that it produces tillers (shoots that grow from the base of the plant).



Flower

- Flowering stems are triangular in cross section and sharply angled.
- Flowers are very small and grouped in catkin-like spikes, most of which are female.
- Flowers hang at the end of long thin nodding stalks.

Fruit/seed

- Seeds are small smooth triangular nuts.
- Seeds are enclosed within a long beaked covering about 5mm long.

Leaves/stems

- Leaves are about 5mm wide, Y-shaped in cross section (with gradually tapering tips), often exceeding the flowering stems in length.
- Leaf edges are harsh and will cut if you pull your fingers through the leaves.
- The sheath at the bottom of each leaf is dark brown.