

GIANT RAT'S TAIL GRASS

WEED OF THE MONTH

WANTED: GIANT RAT'S TAIL GRASS

Have you seen Giant Rat's Tail Grass? Giant Rat's Tail Grass (*Sporobolus pyramidalis*) is an invasive weed that can reduce and out-compete pasture productivity, and cause significant degradation of natural areas.



The grass was originally introduced to Australia as a contaminant in pasture seed, and has now adapted to large areas of eastern Queensland.

Flowering and seeding occurs usually in summer, autumn and spring. Giant Rat's Tail Grass can produce up to 85,000 seeds per square meter in a year, with initial seed viability of approximately 90 per cent. The seed is viable for up to 10 years.

The seeds can become sticky when wet, which can increase the spread by attaching to livestock, machinery and people. The grass may also be spread by water, mud and hay and untested pasture seed. With so many different ways of dispersal and thousands of seeds, Giant Rat's Tail Grass is a Weed of National Significance.

Here are some tips to help you identify Giant Rat's Tail Grass:

- Rat's Tail Grasses are robust, tufted, perennial grasses growing to 2m.
- The long, narrow, dark green leaf blades are about 20-50cm long.
- The seed head is up to 45cm long and can change shape to an elongated pyramid when mature.
- The seed head has many short branches, initially held close to the stem. When the seed head opens they become stiffly spreading with numerous tiny flower spikelets.
- The tiny egg-shaped seeds turn yellow- or reddish-brown as they mature.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Online

- www.qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/plants/herbarium/identify-specimens
- www.cook.qld.gov.au/services/biosecurity/plants

Please help us to target this invasive plant for early detection and eradication.

If you are unsure whether you have found Giant Rat's Tail Grass, send a sample to the Queensland Herbarium for identification. The service is free, and instructions on how to collect and send a sample can be found at the Queensland Herbarium's website.

If your sample is Giant Rat's Tail Grass or another weed, contact Council's Biosecurity Services team for treatment or management plans.