



HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PEST PLANT?

Black-grass (*Alopecurus myosuroides*)



Photo © Franck Le Driant/FloreAlpes.com



Black-grass seeds

HELP STOP BLACK-GRASS

The Ministry for Primary Industries is working with Federated Farmers, Foundation for Arable Research, Environment Canterbury Regional Council, and the NZ Grain and Seed Trade Association to determine if there is any black-grass in New Zealand and to mitigate any biosecurity risk.

WHY IS BLACK-GRASS A PEST?

Black-grass, also known as slender meadow fox tail, is a serious invasive plant that affects winter crops in Europe, including winter wheat, grass seed, rapeseed, forage legumes and barley. Black-grass spreads quickly in cultivated crops, competing for light, nutrients, space and water, resulting in yield loss.

Black-grass could have an economic impact on New Zealand agriculture by competing with winter crop production, reducing yields, increasing cultivation costs, affecting purity of seed lines, and impacting on seed markets internationally. In Europe, black-grass has developed resistance to many herbicides used for grass weed control. As a result, there are very few options available for controlling it in many crops.

WHAT DOES BLACK-GRASS LOOK LIKE?

Black-grass is an annual that can grow up to a metre high. It can grow above winter crops. The leaves are hairless, with an open sheath, and rolled in the bud. The sheaths can be green or purplish.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE SEEN BLACK GRASS?

Do not disturb the seed head or attempt to harvest any crop around the potential black grass.

If you have seen black grass or suspect you have seen it, please contact:

- Ministry for Primary Industries – Pests & Diseases Hotline
0800 80 99 66; or

The seed heads of black-grass are smaller in diameter in proportion to their length than those of other perennial species commonly planted for pasture. The seed heads range from approximately 2.5–12.5 cm tall and 0.3–0.6 cm in diameter.

The seed heads are usually reddish-purple in colour, giving the appearance from a distance of “black-grass”. Each black-grass seed head contains about 100 seeds that are mainly shed prior to harvest.

WHEN YOU ARE MOST LIKELY TO SEE ANY SIGN OF BLACK-GRASS

Germination will mostly likely take place from September through to April. Black-grass can go from germination to full maturity within 100 days. Therefore, any black-grass would be most visible from November to April. Black-grass will begin to set seed around this time, and to prevent further onward spread of the seed, early reporting is vital.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Farmers can assist with surveillance and reduce the chance of black-grass becoming established in the area by keeping an eye out for any sign of the pest and, if found, report it immediately.

- Environment Canterbury Regional Council Customer Services Line
0800 324 636 (0800 EC INFO); or
- Foundation for Arable Research
03 345 5783

