

## Frequently Asked Questions

This FAQ fact sheet provides answers about Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*) which is a declared Class A (to be eradicated) and Class C (not to be introduced) weed in accordance with the Northern Territory *Weeds Management Act*.



### How did Mexican feather grass (MFG) get into Australia?

MFG was introduced to Australia when inadvertently mislabelled and sold as an ornamental plant under a range of names including Pony tail, Angel's hair and Elegant spear grass, White tussock, and Texas tussock grass. Mislabelled seeds are also purchased over the internet from other countries.

### Are there similar plants already in Australia?

MFG is closely related and similar in appearance and ecology to serrated tussock, which is regarded as the worst pasture weed in Australia.

### Where is it most likely to be found?

MFG plants have been recovered from nurseries, landscapers and private gardens.

### What is being done to eradicate MFG?

A national campaign to prevent its spread has resulted in MFG being declared a weed in all States and Territories of Australia.

### How much would it cost to control?

It has been estimated that MFG would cost between \$60 and \$120 per hectare to control, depending on whether it was a scattered or dense population.

### Has Mexican feather grass been found in the Northern Territory?

MFG is not currently known to be present in the Northern Territory.

### Why has Mexican feather grass been declared a weed in the Northern Territory?

Mexican feather grass is prohibited entry to Australia by Australian quarantine regulations and is a potentially serious new weed to Australia. Habitats considered at risk of invasion include most open eucalypt woodlands and open grasslands.

### **How does Mexican feather grass reproduce?**

Mexican feather grass is a perennial plant which reproduces by seed. It is an aggressive plant which can produce between 70 000 and 100 000 seeds per plant per year. The resulting seed bank can persist for four years even if further seed production is prevented.

### **How does Mexican feather grass spread?**

Seeds tend to fall nearby the plant and are not normally wind dispersed. However, Mexican feather grass seeds do adhere to clothing, equipment and livestock, which aids in long distance dispersal.

### **What does its declaration mean?**

Its declaration as a weed prohibits the entry into and movement of Mexican feather grass within the Northern Territory.

It is illegal to buy, sell, grow, propagate, store or transport Mexican feather grass.

### **How can I identify Mexican feather grass?**

- Mexican feather grass is a densely tufted perennial grass, almost identical to serrated tussock except when it is in seed.
- Stems are smooth and hairless, growing up to 70 cm high with two or three unthickened nodes.

- Leaves are tightly “rolled” so the edges overlap, 0.25–0.5 mm in diameter and up to 60 cm long. The outer surface is rough to touch.
- Flowers can appear green or purplish in colour.
- Seeds are 2–3 mm long with a bristle-like appendage that is 4.5–9 cm long attached to the end of the seed.

### **If I suspect that I have Mexican feather grass in my garden, how should I dispose of it?**

Landholders are urged not to attempt to control or dispose of Mexican feather grass themselves. If you suspect that you have, or have seen, Mexican feather grass, contact the Weed Management Branch for advice on identification and safe removal.

### **Where can I get more information?**

For more information, contact the Weed Management Branch:

Darwin	08 8999 4567
Katherine	08 8973 8101
Tennant Creek	08 8962 4495
Alice Springs	08 8951 9210
Email	weedinfo.nretas@nt.gov.au