

WEED INFORMATION SHEET

SERRATED TUSSOCK



Serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) is a perennial, drought-resistant, tussock-forming grass with several features that make it a serious weed in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

WHY IS IT A WEED— low feed value and lack of palatability to sheep and cattle is hard to identify when it is not seeding, it is extremely drought tolerant, infests country of both high and low productivity, each plant seeds prolifically and whole seed heads can be carried long distances by the wind, it is very difficult and costly to control, particularly on non-arable land and becomes a monoculture threatening the biodiversity and ecology of agricultural and non-agricultural systems.

Identification. Correct identification of serrated tussock is essential to prevent the spread of the weed to clean areas. Several key features can be used to distinguish it from similar tussock-forming grasses. Using the flowering stems and seed heads is one of the easiest way to identify serrated tussock. The flowering stem of serrated tussock can be up to 90cm, twice as long as the leaves. Once the seed is ripe, the flowering stem will weep over the entire plant to touch the ground.

The seed head is an open panicle (multi-branched stem) up to 35cm long with two or three branches at each junction and one seed at the end of each branch.

The seed head is purple soon after flowering, and then turns a golden brown when the seed has matured. The entire flowering stem will break off from the base of the plant once the seed has ripened. The seed of serrated tussock is unlike the seed of any other tussock grass that it may be confused with. Serrated tussock seeds are 1.5 – 2mm long and enclosed in two reddish brown or purple bracts (glumes), 6 – 10mm long which taper gradually to a point.

The seed has a tuft of short white silky hairs at one end and a long, twisted awn at the other end. Size -tussocks can grow to 45 cm in height and have a diameter at the base of 25 cm.

