

COMBATING A PASTURE INVADER

PROJECT PART-FUNDED BY THE
SUSTAINABLE FARMING FUND

"It is ongoing and the project hasn't finished just because our SFF grant ran out. But it got us started and now the commercial firms are taking over ... It now has a life of its own and that is the way it should be."

Trevor James, AgResearch

THE ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY

A weed invasion can creep in and take hold before a farmer or farming community has really noticed.

Yellow bristle grass, for example, can spread along roadways.

Farmers need to be able to recognise the invader and its behaviours so that they can adjust their management and prevent it establishing and spreading.

Yellow bristle grass (*Setaria pumila*) is an extremely aggressive annual invader that presents a very serious weed threat to pastoral farming.

Its seed passes through the rumen and tends to be spread around the farm in dung.

Yellow bristle grass provides poor-quality forage and dies off after summer, but its aggressive seeding strategies enable it to compete vigorously with better-quality species and open pasture up to other weed species as well.

This is the second of two projects the Sustainable Farming Fund has funded, after a group of Waikato farmers realised Yellow Bristle Grass was an emerging problem and sought scientific input.

The projects have helped them learn more about this weed and its behaviours and to generate practical management advice to share with the pastoral farming community on how to prevent it spreading.

Increasing farmer awareness has been a key objective.

RESULTS TO DATE

- » Avoid grazing stock on pastures containing seeding Yellow Bristle Grass immediately prior to putting them into clean pasture.
- » Two summers out of pasture are required for pasture renovation to effectively control Yellow Bristle Grass.
- » Small infestations of Yellow Bristle Grass can be controlled with Puma S. Puma S is not currently registered for pasture, but Bayer is currently organising this. Also, repeat applications will be required as Yellow Bristle Grass has the ability to germinate over a long period of time.
- » To effectively stop Yellow Bristle Grass from setting seed, glyphosate must be applied before the bristles turn yellow or about the time that it is being pollinated.
- » Managing Yellow Bristle Grass on the roadside may be important to keeping this weed out of pastures.
- » The potential range of Yellow Bristle Grass covers most of the North and South Islands, with Canterbury being particularly susceptible. The Canterbury area has only a single confirmed infestation to date.
- » In dry years, maintaining a competitive sward of perennial ryegrass is paramount.

An updated version of the Ute Guide has been produced (and can be downloaded from the internet).

This project has now ended but trials of chemicals to help control Yellow Bristle Grass are continuing.

AT A GLANCE

SFF project	08/047 Management and Control of Yellow Bristle Grass and Other C4 Grass Weeds SFF investment: \$212 000
Other cash contributors	PGG Wrightson, Waikato Regional Council, Ballance, Bayer, Nufarm, DairyNZ, Waikato farmers
Total project value (including in-kind contributions): \$396 000	

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