



NSW DEPARTMENT OF
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Weed Alert

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PLANT?

Bear-skin fescue

(*Festuca gautieri*)



Bear-skin fescue.
Photo Copyright: The Weekly Times

INTRODUCTION

Bear-skin fescue is a perennial tussock grass that grows to around 20 cm high. This grass has a low palatability to stock and may become a dominant species in suitable habitats such as the southern highlands of NSW.

Bear-skin fescue has been traded as a garden ornamental in recent years. This species is not yet known to have escaped cultivation in Australia.

WORLD STATUS

Bear-skin fescue is native to south western France and north eastern Spain. It is a weed of grazing land in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

Bear-skin fescue was introduced into Australia as an ornamental garden plant. This species has now been banned for sale or distribution in Western Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales.

IDENTIFICATION

Bear-skin fescue grows in small round pin cushion like tussocks.

Leaves

The leaves are very fine and thread-like, only 0.4–0.7 mm wide with a pointed tip. The leaf blade is smooth and can be straight or curved. Leaves can be bright green to bluish grey.



Bear-skin fescue.
Photo Copyright: The Weekly Times

Flowers

The seed head stems (culms) are 20–50 cm long and up to 1.7 mm in diameter. The flowers form on a 4.5–7 cm long seed head (panicle). Each panicle bears a few flowers (spikelets) that are 9–11 mm long.

Seeds

The seeds are broadly oval-to-oblong shaped.

GROWTH AND SPREAD

Bear-skin fescue prefers well drained soils and cooler climates but is drought and heat tolerant.

It flowers in summer and can spread vegetatively or by seed. Old plants tend to spread outwards while dying back in the center of the tussock.

CONTROL

Little information on the control of this species is available.

If you have planted bear-skin fescue or know someone who has, contact your Local Council Weeds Officer or NSW DPI.

Before removing this species, cut off all seed heads, bag them and place in landfill. Dig up and remove adult plants, any fallen seed and any soil containing seed around the plant. Place this material in landfill.

Monitor sites where the species has been planted to ensure seedlings that emerge are controlled before flowering and that spread of the plants has not occurred.

WATCH OUT FOR AND REPORT ANY BEAR-SKIN FESCUE

Festuca gautieri is declared noxious throughout NSW as a Class 5 weed under the NSW *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*. As a notifiable weed all outbreaks of bear-skin fescue must be reported to the local council.

If you have seen bear-skin fescue please report it to your Council Weeds Officer or NSW Department of Primary Industries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact your local council weeds officer or district agronomist, or telephone the NSW Department of Primary Industries Hotline on 1800 680 244

