



RECOGNISE AND DESTROY AFRICAN
LOVEGRASS; GET ON TOP OF
INFESTATIONS AND DON'T LET IT SEED

MANAGING WEEDS
ON THE FAR SOUTH COAST OF NSW



African
Lovegrass



This guide has been compiled by the Southern Rivers CMA with assistance from the Bega Valley Shire Council, Eurobodalla Shire Council, Dr Bill Johnston and the Farming For Weeds Suppression Project Steering Group October 2012.

Grazing Management for dense infestations

The aim is to graze lovegrass when it is short and to keep it short. This will result in better utilisation of the plant, better stock performance and greater potential for other pasture species to compete.

- High grazing pressure is required to keep lovegrass short and actively growing - its most nutritious state. Stock density may need to be as high as 10 to 15 times your usual rate to gain maximum utilisation. To achieve this, subdivide paddocks into smaller areas and combine mobs. For cattle, this can be done cheaply using single-wire electric fences.
- Start small by subdividing one or two larger paddocks. Rotate stock through each smaller paddock, aiming for full utilisation of feed before moving them on to the next.
- When lovegrass starts producing fresh growth in spring, get into the rhythm of moving stock to utilise this growth, while not overgrazing the paddock.
- Grazing needs to be heavy and frequent (large numbers of animals for short periods), increasing from spring into summer. This may mean grazing animals for less than 2 weeks in each paddock, with recovery of 2 to 6 weeks. Aim to open up thick stands and go into winter with a minimum of accumulated lovegrass forage.
- Experiment with different stock densities to determine what works best. With cattle, the best class of stock to eat out dense lovegrass paddocks are heifers. Dry cows can be used, but consider when they will be calving and don't push them too hard. It is difficult to fatten cattle on lovegrass dominated pastures.
- If lovegrass growth rates are very high, leave a paddock "out" to be dealt with separately by slashing, burning, making silage, or simply hold it in reserve.
- If lovegrass growth rates are slow, introduce more paddocks into the system to allow grazed paddocks to recover for longer.
- Monitor the effect of grazing through observation so decisions can be made when to move stock. Don't move cattle out of paddocks too soon. Wait until 80% of the standing feed has been grazed or trampled. Monitor grazing of desirable pasture species to avoid overgrazing.
- Over time, further reducing the size and increasing the number of paddocks will provide greater flexibility. This will give you greater ability to respond well to seasonal conditions and lovegrass growth rates.
- Focus on what is manageable and develop a flexible system that can respond to seasonal circumstances without compromising the production of the grazing enterprise.
- Be patient, flexible and consistent. A managed grazing system may take several years to get going and show results.



African lovegrass is a tall, summer-growing grass that has come to dominate large areas of South Coast pastures. It is a free-seeding perennial that grows rapidly during spring.



If left to spread, lovegrass can form dense stands – therefore aim to keep clean paddocks clean.



Although fresh growth is moderately palatable, it quickly loses palatability and feed value if allowed to mature and dry off.



Control methods can include careful and strategic use of appropriate herbicides.

African Lovegrass Facts

Working against you

- Lovegrass prefers soils which are acidic and extremely low in fertility (especially low in phosphorous). These soil conditions are also not favourable for establishing competing pasture species.
- Lovegrass has a small seed which can be easily brushed by animals from seeding plants to nearby pasture. It is spread more widely in soil on vehicles, in hay and dung.
- Seed can be easily moved from place to place by farm vehicles, tractors, slashers and earth-moving machines.
- Seeds from isolated parent plants can create lovegrass patches. Patches can join to cover paddocks, farms and eventually districts. Spread may be slow but it is relentless.
- Lovegrass establishes on bare ground. Over-grazing (especially in dry years) and the killing of non-target species by chipping or careless herbicide use can produce ideal conditions for germination.
- If not managed, livestock will preferentially graze other pasture species before lovegrass. This will allow lovegrass plants to flourish and dominate.

Working for you

- Lovegrass seed is extremely small and light is required for germination.
- Seedlings are less competitive against other pasture species.
- If you can manage for better pastures and good ground cover, you have a good chance of suppressing germination.
- Seed is not wind-borne, so it can be easier to control the spread on your property by monitoring roads, stock feeding sites and stock routes.
- If you control isolated plants before they spread, you can stop lovegrass encroachment.

Legal Obligations

African Lovegrass is a listed noxious weed and must be controlled as required by the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*.

Contact your Council for more information.



Funded by:



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For further information phone:

Bega Valley Shire Weed Officers: 02 6499 2222
Eurobodalla Shire Weed Officers: 02 4474 1000
Department of Primary Industries: 02 6491 7800

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BEST PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

African Lovegrass

Management Calendar

TARGET	Maintain groundcover to reduce establishment of lovegrass seedlings.	Manage for cool season species, especially clover. Aim for a balanced productive pasture in spring. Maintain groundcover to reduce the establishment of lovegrass seedlings.											
PLANT STAGE	Growing actively	Dying off/Senescing	Dormant/frosted			Seedling germination; Adult plants commence growth			Active growth and seed set				
FORAGE VALUE	Moderate for leaves less than 6 weeks old	Rapid decline for forage older than 6 weeks of age	Old growth has no value, fresh growth moderate value			Most nutritious growth stage is from early tillering to flowering			Moderate				
MONTH	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	
ACTION	Remove isolated lovegrass plants from clean paddocks.			Reduce paddock size to aid grazing management. Get sub-clover and cool season grasses into pastures.					Maintain groundcover to reduce establishment of lovegrass seedlings.				
	Open up pastures by heavy rotational grazing (maximum rest interval of 6 weeks) or slashing. Strategic chemical control can be effective – consult your agronomist.			Extend the grazing period and increase the recovery period. Get sub-clover and cool season grasses into pastures.		Lovegrass is unresponsive to control actions at this time. Manage for clover and cool season grasses to increase competition. Subject to seasonal conditions, reduce the standing mass of accumulated dead material.			In early spring, start rotational grazing early. Increase grazing pressure as plants start to grow leaves. Monitor what stock are grazing and move them on once seedheads and some leaf is grazed. Come back onto the same pasture quickly. Strategic chemical control can be effective – consult your agronomist				



African Lovegrass can be confused with native Poa grasses. If unsure seek advice.

- 1 African lovegrass is a densely tufted, perennial species that can grow up to 1.2m in height. The plant is generally erect, but stems may bend at the lower nodes – the whole plant often adopts a weeping habit. The narrow leaf blades are of varying lengths and are coloured bright green to blue-green. Leaves are generally hairless, tough to break and have distinct parallel veins.
- 2 The young flower head may be compact and often has a black/grey seed head. The seed head then spreads and can be up to 30cm long.
- 3 In heavy infestations, use high impact grazing or slashing to keep lovegrass plants short and actively growing. This will improve the feed value, and open dense stands to encourage other pasture species to grow.
- 4 Aim to keep plants short with heavy grazing or slashing.
- 5 Take care to minimise spray drift onto desirable species, or creating bare ground “halos” when spot-spraying isolated lovegrass plants.
- 6 Bare ground promotes weed establishment. This lovegrass seedling will eventually replace its dead parent plant.

Management Actions

- As a priority recognise and remove isolated plants from clean pastures.
- To reduce spread and establishment, manage for good ground-cover. Also monitor and control lovegrass in high-risk areas such as property boundaries, tracks and stockyards.
- If using chemical control observe all precautions stated on product labels, especially in relation to withholding and plant-back periods. Seek advice from your local agronomist.

Scattered infestations

- Scattered lovegrass plants can best be controlled by chipping or by spot-spraying using Glyphosate based herbicides.
- Flupropanate-sodium based herbicides can also be used, but **seek expert advice as they are more difficult to use correctly.**
- Take care that you don't overspray – bare ground around sprayed plants is an ideal environment for the re-establishment of lovegrass and other weeds.

Medium infestations

- Focus on managing grazing to reduce lovegrass dominance. Grazing lovegrass heavily early in its growing season, allows other species to become more competitive and increases groundcover (see page 4).
- Slashing will remove leaf bulk and can assist in implementing better grazing strategies.
- Spot-spray as for scattered infestations.
- Hard grazing, slashing or burning in the winter will allow lovegrass to grow back more rapidly than other species. This provides an opportunity to selectively control it with Glyphosate based products using roller or carpet wiping equipment.
- Boom spray larger patches with Glyphosate or Flupropanate-sodium based herbicides.

Dense infestations

- Focus on managed grazing to reduce lovegrass dominance (see page 4).
 - Boom spray or roller wipe as for medium infestations. Beware that broad-scale lovegrass control with herbicide invariably results in a massive autumn germination of broad-leaved weeds. Be prepared for the cost of continued weed control and for the re-establishment of desirable introduced or native pasture species.
- A year of cropping following lovegrass control and prior to pasture re-establishment, can aid in reducing weed infestation.
- Burning lovegrass to remove excess dry bulk can aid in opening up dense stands. Aim for a cool-burn and be prepared for weed emergence after burning. Have strategies in place to manage regenerating lovegrass. Burning in late winter may reduce the likelihood of spring weed germination.
- Before burning contact your local Rural Fire Service for advice and assistance.**



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