



## WEEDS

# RYEGRASS

### Glossary

#### Annual

Completing the full cycle of germination to fruiting to a single year, and then dying.

#### Inflorescence

The arrangement of the flowers and flower axes

#### Perennial

With a life span extending over more than two growing seasons.

### For More Information

#### Contact

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## *Lolium sp.*

### Introduction

Originally introduced to as a pasture species in southern Australia in the early 1900s, Annual Ryegrass (*Lolium rigidum*) has since become a major problem, particularly in cereal crops in the wheat belt area. It is the most prevalent ryegrass species in Australia.

Annual ryegrass is a volunteer invades areas of disturbed, as well as cultivated land. It is especially prevalent on roadside verges and can also be found on coastal dunes and saline areas.

Has large genetic variability, which contributes to its ability to rapidly adapt to a wide range of climatic and other factors, such as break-of season rains, seeding dates, cultivation practices, grazing patterns and herbicide use. Fertile hybrids are often formed between *Lolium* species.

Seed heads can be toxic. Its pollen is a major contributor to the discomfort of asthma

sufferers.

### Origin

The Mediterranean, Europe, North Africa and Asia.

### Life form

Annual/biennial/perennial grass.

### Description

Up to 1 m tall; young plants are often characterised by a reddish tinge at the base; highly genetically variable.

**Leaves:** Smooth; stiff; shiny leaf blades.

**Flowers:** Narrow inflorescence of numerous small spikelets; 4-18 mm long.

### Reproduction & Dispersal

By seeds transported by water, wind and mammals. Seeds may remain viable in the seed bank for up to six years.

### Distribution

Scattered populations: Geraldton to Esperance.

### Growing Season

Autumn through to mid-Winter.

### Flowering Season

Spring and Summer.

### Effect on Ecosystem

Annual ryegrass is not a particularly competitive plant,

however it has the ability to multiply the seed bank (viable/healthy seeds in the soil) from small numbers to massive numbers over a few seasons.

### Control

Needs to be integrated whether resistance is confirmed or not.

### Manual Removal

Prevent seed set by hand weeding, mowing, cultivation, strategic grazing, used with spray topping in spring and thorough hot burns of standing (not grazed) mature plants can result in useful reductions in viable seed numbers.

It is essential that the infestations be removed annually before seeds set in spring. Emerging regrowth should also be removed.

### Chemical Treatment

Use of a grass selective herbicide, four to six weeks after break of season, before flowering, will control without affecting most established natives.

If populations are resistant in agricultural areas, use glyphosate. In areas with native grasses, reduce the herbicide dose.

Please see 'Herbicides and Pesticides' factsheet for more information about spraying chemicals.



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