

# Para grass

## *Urochloa mutica* (formerly *Bracharia mutica*)

HABIT	STEMS & ROOTS	LEAVES	FLOWERS	FRUIT & SEED
				
A vigorous perennial grass to 2m tall.	Strong stems, with dense soft hairs, rooting at nodes.	Leaves and sheaths generally hairy. Leaf blades to 20mm wide and 30cm long.	Flowering head of several spreading racemes on a single central axis.	Rarely sets seed. It is usually propagated by stolon cuttings.

Para grass is not a declared weed in the Northern Territory.

### The problem

Para grass is a highly invasive grass that spreads vigorously. It can occupy both freshwater and brackish environments and has spread extensively across Top End floodplains. Para grass is capable of replacing the floodplain ecosystems with vast areas containing only the one single plant species, instead of the diverse array of grasses, sedges and shrubs required to support the native animals of the floodplains. Of particular concern is the loss of habitat for magpie geese. Para grass restricts access to water and impedes traditional hunting. Para grass seeds contain very little nutrition for seed-feeding animals when compared to other grasses such as native wild rice.

Para grass is a serious environmental weed in northern Australia, in part due to its ability to carry intense fires in seasonally dry and ungrazed wetlands. These hot fires can kill native animals such as turtles, destroy trees and rainforest patches, damage habitats, and in turn facilitate further spread of para grass.

### Habitat and distribution

Para grass is probably native to flood plains of sub-Saharan tropical Africa and was introduced into Australia for use as a pasture species. Para grass is planted for grazing in flat, poorly drained or high rainfall environments.

Para grass is reported to tolerate a range of conditions and thrives on flood plains, along drainage lines and creek banks, and in disturbed sites in urban and rural areas. Para grass forms dense floating mats, 1-2 m thick, over water bodies and tolerates water depths up to 1 m or more. It withstands both seasonal drought and prolonged flooding or waterlogging, but has limited growth during dry weather. Para grass is relatively shade tolerant.

## Preventing spread of Para grass

Para grass can be spread by seed but is more usually spread vegetatively by stem pieces, which can be moved by water, people or animals such as birds and cattle.

While para grass is considered a valuable pasture species, it is not recommended that para grass be introduced into new areas or catchments, particularly when there is no grazing.

By implementing the following recommendations potential spread can be significantly reduced:

- map infestations before commencing control to enable the development of a coordinated management strategy
- control minor and upstream infestations first.

## Para grass control

### Chemical control

Chemical and concentration	Rate	Situation, method and comments
<b>Glyphosate 360 g/L</b> Various trade names and formulations	10 ml / 1L	<b>Seedling or adult (individuals or infestation):</b> Foliar spray - apply when actively growing

### Optimum treatment times – Darker colours represent preferred months for foliar treatment.

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
-----	-----	-------	-------	-----	------	------	-----	------	-----	-----	-----

When treating para grass in an aquatic situation, be sure to only use products registered for that particular use. Not in waterways deeper than 60 cm.

### Non chemical control

Hand grubbing and slashing and heavily grazing.

Fire has a place in para grass management programs. While it does not kill the grass it removes dry and dead material that impedes spraying and promotes regrowth that is susceptible to herbicide treatment. Strong flooding at the beginning of the Wet season can drown para grass that has been heavily grazed or burnt (or sprayed). However, the timing of floods can be difficult to predict.

### Disclaimer

In the Northern Territory, a registered product must only be used in situations consistent to those appearing on the label, unless authorised under a permit; and a person:

- must not have in their possession or use a chemical product unless the product is registered in Australia (exemptions apply)
- may use a registered product at a concentration, rate or frequency lower than that specified on the label unless this is specifically prohibited on the label. This does not apply to herbicide use occurring under an Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) permit
- may use a registered product to control a pest not specified on the label provided the pest is in a situation that is on the label and use on that pest is not specifically prohibited on the label
- may also use a registered product using a method not specified on the label unless this is specifically prohibited on the label.

Users of agricultural (or veterinary) chemical products must always read the label and any permit, before using the product and strictly comply with the directions on the label and any conditions of any permit. Users are not absolved from compliance with the directions on the label or conditions of the permit by reason of any statement made in or omission from this publication.

### Further information

Weed Management Officers from the Weed Management Branch can provide advice on all aspects of weed management including control techniques, biological control, legislative responsibilities, policy advice, monitoring and reporting and regional planning.

For further information on weed management planning, integrated control, herbicide application techniques and monitoring please refer to the [NT Weed Management Handbook](#).