**Mexican feather grass in NSW**

Matthew McGrath

State Priority Weeds Coordinator, Invasive Species Biosecurity, NSW Department of Primary Industries, 322 Pine Gully Rd, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

Email: matthew.mcgrath@dpi.nsw.gov.au

**SUMMARY**

Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima)* is regulated as Prohibited Matter under the NSW *Biosecurity Act 2015* because it can outcompete desirable plants in pastures and bushland.

Mexican feather grass is a perennial tussock forming plant native to southern USA, Central and South America. Each Mexican feather grass plant can produce up to 100 000 seeds per year. Most seeds germinate within two years but they can live in the soil for at least 7 years before germinating. From mid spring to summer seeds germinate on well-drained soils where there is little competition from other vegetation.

Mexican feather grass plants were first discovered in a garden Tamworth in 2006 by a weeds officer who at first thought it was a Serrated tussock plant. Mexican feather grass looks like Serrated tussock (Nassella trichotoma) which has drooping flower heads, rather than erect flower heads. Serrated tussock is also shorter (45 cm), has a wider seed, and a much smaller (25 mm) awn. Within the same year Mexican feather grass was found at Tenterfield (Northern Tablelands).

Mexican feather grass was accidentally introduced as a garden plant. It has been sold through nurseries under incorrect labelling.

In 2008 a retailer sold potted plants of Mexican feather grass that were labelled with another name. All plants in NSW were quickly recovered and destroyed. However, some plants in ACT and Victoria had been sold on and planted into gardens.

Other Mexican feather grass plants have later been discovered around Leeton (Riverina) 2018, Lithgow (Central Tablelands) in 2019, and Barden Ridge (Greater Sydney Region) in 2020.