



# Managing the spread of tall wheat grass from saline areas in a grazing enterprise

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*This Agriculture Note describes the management practices necessary for controlling the spread of tall wheat grass from saline areas in grazing enterprises.*

## Introduction

Tall wheat grass germinates from seed. To prevent tall wheat grass invading into unintentional areas, the simple answer is – **Don't let it set seed over summer.**

In land affected by secondary salinity (man induced salinity), tall wheat grass is an invaluable summer active, perennial grass pasture in combination with companion legumes for rehabilitating and improving agricultural productivity from these areas.

Typical of all introduced plants, its management must be aimed at confining it to where it is sown. The easiest and most effective method to achieve this with tall wheat grass is, don't allow it to set seed over summer.

## Management

In a grazing enterprise, there is no conceivable reason for tall wheat grass to set seed. Its pasture quality declines, becomes rank and unpalatable, is difficult to manage, can become invasive and a haven for feral animals.



*Figure 1. Poorly managed tall wheat grass*

To restrict the spread of tall wheat grass and gain the most out of the pasture, graze it from spring, through summer

and into autumn. (Tall wheat grass tolerates hard grazing over summer the year after establishment). Maintain the pasture at a height of approximately 10 cm over summer. If grazing is not possible, slash or burn when conditions suit. (Refer to Agriculture Note AG0707 - *Establishment and Management of tall wheat grass in Saline Soils for Productivity*, Chris Nichols, 1998).

When managed correctly, *tall wheat grass* is a very productive grass and provides both economic and environmental benefits to the landholder and the broader community. Well managed *tall wheat grass* pastures can:

- Increase stocking rates from 0.5 DSE's/ha up to 8 DSE's /ha.
- Provide palatable green feed over summer.
- Use soil moisture and dry the profile out over summer into autumn.
- Leach salt stored in the soil down the profile after summer rainfall events.
- Reduce salt loads entering waterways.
- Reduce soil erosion and water velocity over the soil.



*Figure 2. Well managed tall wheat grass*

## Where to sow tall wheat grass

To prevent *tall wheat grass* spreading into unintentional areas, several environmental best management practices

need to be considered. *Tall wheat grass* and companion legumes:

- **Should only be sown** in man induced saline areas (secondary salinity)
- **Must not be sown** in naturally salt affected wetlands (primary salinity).
- **Must not be** allowed to set seed over summer.
- **Should not be sown** adjacent to or in environmentally sensitive areas (riparian zones, areas of primary salinity, coastal and inland wetlands, breeding or feeding habitats for native fauna, areas containing rare and threatened flora).
- **Should be sown** where the aim is to establish and manage it as a viable grazing pasture.
- **Must not be sown** if the intension is only for ground cover and not to be grazed.

**Alternatives to sowing tall wheat grass**

In situations where *tall wheat grass* is not the desired species to sow, there are a wide range of alternative salt tolerant native trees and grasses suited to saline environments. The table below provides some options available to the landholder. For tree species selection and management, refer to reference ‘*Trees and Shrubs for South West Victoria*’, Bird et al. (1996). For native grass species selection and management, refer to ‘*Spotting Soil*

*Salting, A Victorian Field Guide to Salt Indicator Plants*’, Matters & Bozon (1995)

**Table 1. Table of native salt tolerant grasses and trees suitable for planting in salt affected land (this list is not exhaustive).**

Salt Tolerant Native Grass	Salt Tolerant Native Trees
Agrostis adomsonii	Grey Bull Oak*
Australian Salt Grass	Swamp Paperbark
Hill Wallaby Grass	River Red Gum
Windmill Grass	Black Box
Streaked Arrow Grass	Drooping She-oak
Saltmarsh Grass	Swamp Gum

\* Suited to high salinity sites but not indigenous to SW Victoria

**References**

Bird, P.R. Kearney, G.A. Jowett, D.W. (1996) *Trees and Shrubs for South West Victoria*. Agriculture Victoria, PVI, Hamilton, Victoria.

Matters, J. Bozon, J. (1995) *Spotting Soil Salting- A Victorian Field Guide to Salt Indicator Plants*. Conservation and Natural Resources, Victoria, 1995.

Nichols. C. (1998) *Establishment and Management of tall wheat grass in Saline Soils for Productivity*. Agriculture Note AG0707, NRE Victoria.

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