



## FACT SHEETS

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# Buffel Grass

## *Cenchrus ciliaris*

Buffel grass is an introduced perennial grass that has significant capability to become a serious weed and displace native vegetation. It is native to Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and has become a weed in many other parts of the world.

Buffel grass can significantly damage natural ecosystems by changing the vegetation structure and composition and by increasing the risk of fire.

Buffel grass is spreading in the SA Arid Lands and has recently been found in the Riverland within the SA Murray-Darling Basin region.

Prevention of further spread is important because once Buffel Grass is established it is difficult and costly to control.

## IDENTIFICATION

Buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) is a tufted erect or spreading perennial grass to 1 metre tall. It forms large tussocks, is deep rooted and is actively growing in the warm summer months.

It is distinguished by its dense white to purple seed heads that form a thick cylindrical spike

to 10 - 15cm long, rather like a fox tail.

The seed heads are covered in clusters of bristles giving them a fluffy appearance.

Buffel grass is very drought tolerant and can establish in soils of variable fertility but prefers soils of lighter texture. It is sensitive to water logging and has only moderate salt tolerance.

Buffel grass is summer active. Established plants can respond rapidly to small rain events in spring, summer and autumn. Plants can germinate from seed, mature and flower within 6 weeks of a significant rainfall, ie usually 20-25 mm at least. Plants that appear dead can revive and successfully produce seed.

Buffel grass aggressively colonises riparian habitats where it forms dense monocultures, displacing native vegetation.

Thick swards of buffel grass increase the risk of fire by providing large dry fuel loads and increase the intensity and frequency of natural fire regimes.



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## CONTROL & MANAGEMENT

Once established buffel grass is difficult to control. Early intervention is the key. Control methods will depend on the size of the infestation and where it is located.

Key management strategies aim to:

- Prevent further spread of buffel grass by targeting key pathways of movement
- Prioritise buffel grass control to reduce spread and control new infestations

If you find this pest plant in our region then please report it to the SA MDB NRM Board on ph: 8532 9100.

## REFERENCES

- » Pest Management: buffel grass factsheet; SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board June 2009
- » Weed Identification Sheet – buffel grass ([www.weeds.org.au](http://www.weeds.org.au))

