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Be aware of

Weed Wise

HYMENACHNE

(*Hymenachne amplexicaulis*) is a semi-aquatic perennial grass that has become a major weed of wetlands, flood plains and sugar cane crops of northern Australia.

Originally introduced to Queensland and the Northern Territory as a ponded pasture species, hymenachne has invaded freshwater wetlands, flood plains and river banks.

It forms dense infestations, displaces native plant species, reduces biodiversity and threatens native wetland habitat.

Native to the tropics of South and Central America, it is a serious weed in Australia, the West Indies, Indonesia, the Florida wetlands of USA and Suriname.

Once considered a source of dry season fodder for cattle, it has been used as a forage crop in Australia, Venezuela, Mexico and Cuba.

Hymenachne is considered one of Australia's worst weeds, is a

weed of national significance and a class one noxious weed in NSW.

It has the potential to spread further in northern NSW and become a major weed of wetlands and waterways.

Small infestations have already been found on the NSW North Coast.

A native hymenachne species occurs in northern Australia.

It does not grow south of Mackay, Queensland, and is not considered a problem.

Hymenachne is an erect grass that can grow in water up to two metres deep.

It prefers swampy situations such as riverbanks and seasonally flooded areas.

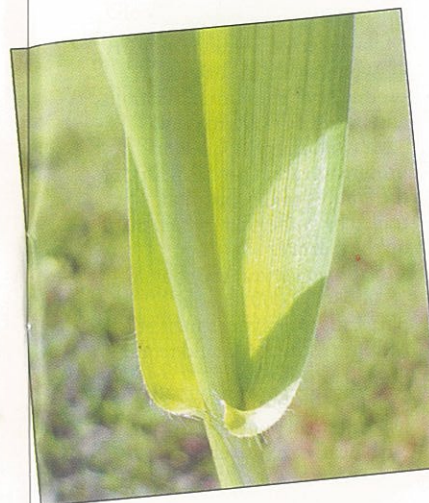
The hairless stems grow up to 1.6-metres tall and contain white pith.

Submerged stems quickly produce roots from numerous nodes.

The leaf blades are 20 centimetres to 35cm long and 2cm to 3cm wide.

A key identifying feature of Hymenachne is that the base of the leaf blade clasps around the stem (pictured).

It flowers in summer and



autumn and the flower-heads are spike-like and cylindrical, about eight millimetres wide and up to 40cm long.

Hymenachne reproduces by seed, broken stem fragments and stolons.

A large number of viable seeds are produced and require contact with waterlogged or moist soil for at least 48 hours before germination which can occur all year round.

Controlling outbreaks

IN JUNE THE NSW CLARENCE Valley welcomed a new unwanted guest – hymenachne.

The original infestation of the weed has been treated, said Clarence Valley Council senior environmental officer (weed management) Reece Luxton, Grafton, and further inspections have been done to ensure it hasn't spread elsewhere.

"We have conducted a survey and checked immediate surrounding properties (to the infestation) and did some aerial checking downstream from where we found it," Mr Luxton said.

The infestation was found by a Catchment Management Authority officer and confirmed by the council weeds team, who have secured funding from the NSW Department of Primary Industries for further surveys.

Stolons run along the ground and produce roots at each node, forming a new plant.

Broken fragments of plant can be carried to new locations by floodwater and will take root in moist soil. It thrives in nutrient-rich water.

Seed is spread during annual flooding events, in mud attached to waterbirds or in contaminated stock feed.

Flood waters will also transport fragments into waterways, irrigation storage facilities, sugar cane crops and natural wetlands.

You can help prevent the spread of weeds by:

- disposing of all unwanted garden plants in a sealed plastic bag in the bin;
- learning to recognise weeds; and
- reporting weed infestations to your local council weed officer or NSW Department of Primary Industries at weeds@dpi.nsw.gov.au or call 1800 680 244.

■ Visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/weeds
■ Article courtesy of NSW Department of Primary Industries.

— KIM CHAPPELL



NSW Department of Primary Industries invasive species officer Rod Ensby with landholder Nick Duckworth, identifying the key features of hymenachne on his property at Gurrang, north of Grafton.

Photo: Reece Luxton

the invader

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The C-DAX SprayRider is a quality 12-volt spot sprayer designed exclusively for mounting to an ATV. Compatible with a variety of spray booms, hose reels, spray guns and other optional accessories. SprayRider is suitable for a wide range of weed control operations. Dual legs increase stability and ensure reduced centre of gravity. Unique suction system ensures evacuation of tank.



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The C-DAX Eliminator is an extremely robust, trailed weed wiper designed to control weeds while preserving pastures. The electronic chemical flow controller allows operators to quickly adjust the amount of chemical being pumped to the wiping carpets to suit the level of infestation. A pressurised feed system ensures equal amounts of chemical are pumped to either side of the wiper - regardless of the angle of operation. Available in standard 2.3m unit or 4.3m Winged configuration. On board tank is an optional extra.



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