



Tom's Creek
Landcare

African Lovegrass

East Gippsland
Ute Guide



Contents

African Lovegrass is a Regionally Controlled weed in the East Gippsland Catchment area. Landholders have a legal responsibility to take reasonable steps to control its growth and spread. When it comes to effectively managing African Lovegrass, doing nothing is not an option.

02	About
03	Identification
05	Farm Hygiene
06	Management Priorities
07	Integrated Weed Management
11	Flupropanate v. Glyphosate
13	Management Plan

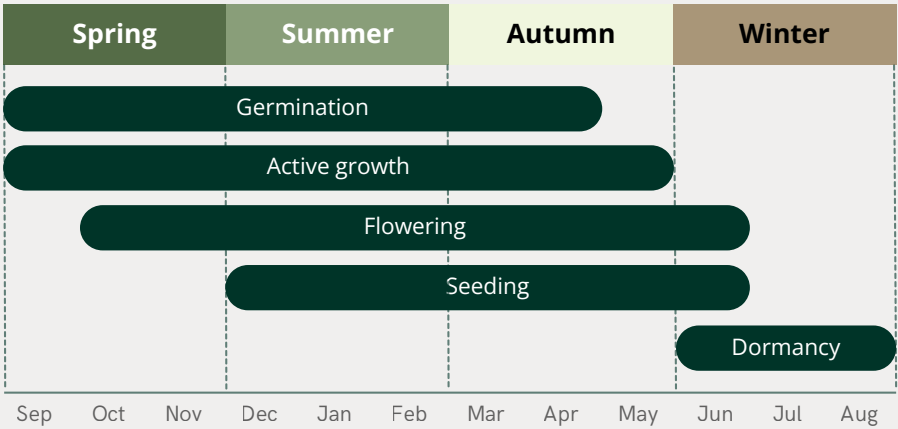
About

African Lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*) is a warm season perennial grass native to southern Africa. It has a high tolerance for low and erratic rainfall, and is highly capable of persisting through dry seasonal and drought conditions.

Initial infestations typically occur in areas of disturbed or low fertility land, acidic sands, and sandy loam soils. Once established, African Lovegrass poses a significant potential to spread to all land types.

Left unmanaged its rapid growth, extreme competitiveness, and unpalatability to livestock can severely reduce or even exclude desirable species. This leads to a drastic drop in feed availability and a reduction in the overall carrying capacity of grazing pastures.

The growth cycle of African Lovegrass is dictated by local seasonal conditions, rather than strictly following a calendar. Plants are dormant when soil temperatures are under 10°C. In southern Australia it has two main documented flush periods; Autumn and Spring.



Identification

Early identification is crucial to managing African Lovegrass infestations.



Loose branched seed head

Seed heads branch out into a loose pyramid shape 6-30cm tall, with tiny seeds at the tips.



Weeping tussock growth

Plants grow as a densely tufted tussock with long, fine leaves which curl or 'weep' at the ends.



Finely serrated leaves

The leaves feel rough or 'sandpapery' if you run your finger along the edge, due to tiny serrations.



Hairs at leaf base

Where the leaf blade meets the stem there is a distinct ring of very fine white hairs, called a ligule.



Dense fibrous root system

Fine, tough roots form a dense fibrous root system down to 50cm which binds tightly to soil.



The most prominent identifier of African Lovegrass in the paddock is the tall, open seed head which often stands above the native or introduced pastures of East Gippsland. Due to its unpalatability to stock, especially once mature, selective grazing can make plants and seed heads more prominent.



African Lovegrass seedhead silhouettes at different stages of maturity.

Relying solely on seed heads for identification means plants have already reached a reproductive stage. Developing the skill to recognise young plants earlier in the season helps ensure infestations are treated or removed before they can contribute new seeds to the soil bank. This means looking at the plants colour, and recognising the small, soft leaves of juvenile plants.

The colour of the plant is highly variable depending on its growth stage and the time of year. Recognising these colour transitions, from the striking green or blue-green of new growth to the leaden-grey of the seed heads, is essential for accurate year-round identification.

During summer when many common pasture grasses have yellowed off, ALG may retain its colour. It also responds to moisture faster than many desirable temperate pasture species, and exhibits a post-rain green-up making infestations highly visible against a dormant background.

Farm Hygiene

Implementing best practice biosecurity measures is the most effective way to prevent regional spread.

Establishing a procedure for people visiting your farm can significantly reduce the spread of weeds onto, within, and from your property.

Biosecurity checklist
Identify weeds that are an infestation risk to the property.
Identify and map existing weed infestations and update with new outbreaks.
Establish dedicated vehicle tracks and parking areas.
Ensure vehicles and machinery are blown or hosed down on entry and exit.
Check undercarriage, blades, and tyres for visible seeds or stems.
Establish a quarantine paddock to hold new stock for at least 10 days.
Identify and monitor entry points such as fencelines, laneways, and waterways.
Limit soil disturbance and re-seed disturbed soil immediately.
Buy weed free hay and feed, and request a Commodity Vendor Declaration.
Regularly review and monitor your property and hygiene practices.

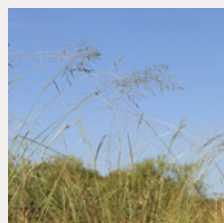
Management Priorities

Early detection and rapid action are the best strategies against African Lovegrass infestations.



Reduce seed entry

The simplest way to reduce seed entry is to implement strict biosecurity protocols. This includes vehicle and machinery cleanliness, and establishing quarantine zones for new livestock. Regularly monitor high-traffic entry points like laneways and stockyards, and ensure all imported fodder or seed is certified weed-free before use.



Prevent seed set

Stopping the next generation of plants germinating is the highest priority for containment. This can be difficult as African Lovegrass is a prolific seeder, able to produce a seed head in a short period of time. To prevent seed production early intervention is key by removing plants or using a herbicide before seeds have set.



Remove adult plants

Established, deep-rooted tussocks out-compete desirable pastures and need to be removed as a priority. Manual removal is best for light or scattered infestations where you can ensure the entire root system is extracted. Seed heads should first be removed and bagged to prevent spreading seed, which are light and easily spread by wind.



Reduce the seed bank

Where large or persistent infestations exist the soil seedbank is the primary source of new plants. Seeds are viable for many years, and are opportunistic growers. Maintaining ground cover with competitive perennial pastures, and ongoing treatment of newly germinated plants, will reduce the seed load.

Integrated Weed Management

Integrating cultural, physical, and chemical weed management methods gives the best chance at success.

African Lovegrass is highly invasive because it spreads rapidly, seeds quickly, and thrives in various soil types. Successful management requires a long-term strategy with high vigilance and sustained effort. Total eradication is often unrealistic. The most achievable goal is to deplete the population to a level where it can be easily controlled.

The most effective strategy is an Integrated Weed Management (IWM) approach. This recognises that no single control measure works alone. By combining pasture management, physical, and chemical control options, landholders can reduce the opportunity for African Lovegrass to germinate and spread.

Infestation type	Identification characteristics	Goal
New emergence	New germination in areas with no mature plants, indicating new seed entry.	Eradicate
Scattered plants	Sparsely occurring mature plants with limited clustering.	Eradicate
Small patches	Small or sparse clusters of plants, likely present for multiple seasons.	Control + eradicate
Medium density	Noticeable clusters of plants persistent for multiple seasons not yet out of control.	Control + renovate
Severe infestation	Extensive infestation where ALG is the predominant species.	Manage + renovate

Cultural

Improving whole farm management practices can reduce the opportunities for weeds to establish infestations.



Pasture competition

Maintain year-round ground cover.
Encourage summer-active species to mimic and outcompete the ALG growth habit.



Soil fertility

Improved nutrients (fertiliser/urea) support desirable species, allowing them to outcompete ALG seedlings.



Grazing management

Rotational grazing allows desirable plants to recover to avoid overgrazing as weeds opportunistically germinate in bare patches.



Biosecurity

Implement farm biosecurity measures, including cleaning vehicles and machinery, and establishing quarantine zones.



Pasture renovation

Complete pasture renovation provides the fastest successful outcome for moderate to widespread infestations.

Physical

Manual plant removal is effective for isolated plants or small outbreaks where limited soil disturbance is desired.



Hand pulling & hoeing

Rapid and effective for single plants and ensures the root system is removed. Best done before plants set seed.



Seed head removal

Use secateurs to remove and bag seed heads before uprooting the plant to reduce seed spread.



Solarisation

Bagged seeds or plants can be "cooked" in the sun. For maximum efficacy, use sealed black plastic bags for 4-8 weeks.



Mowing/slashing

While it can improve palatability for intensive grazing, it is not a control method and carries a high risk of spreading seeds.



Burning

Fire can neutralise seeds in the upper soil profile or stimulate germination that can be easily treated with herbicides.

Chemical

Under an integrated strategy herbicides are used strategically, not exclusively, to manage infestations.



Spot spraying

Most effective for individual plants, margins, or small infestations. Use a coloured dye to avoid double-treating or missing plants.



Wick wiping

Blanket treatment by wiping herbicide onto tall ALG plants that sit above desirable pasture. Requires a height difference.



Boom spraying

Blanket treatment best for large, dense infestations. Must be accompanied by pasture renovation and oversowing.



Drone spraying

While more expensive than traditional methods, it does provide the ability for accurate pre-spray infestation mapping.

Spraying equipment must be correctly calibrated to ensure appropriate application rates. Consult an agronomist for guidance.

To prevent herbicide resistance, rotate chemical modes of action and never rely on herbicides alone. Always follow the label directions for application.

Flupropanate v. Glyphosate

Glyphosate and Flupropanate have proven the most effective herbicides for controlling African Lovegrass.

Feature	Flupropanate	Glyphosate
Primary Action	Slow-acting, systemic, and soil-residual.	Fast-acting, non-selective knockdown.
Absorption	Primarily through roots; needs rain to wash into soil.	Through leaves and stems, must be actively growing.
Visible Results	Very slow; complete die-off can take 3 to 18 months.	Quick; plant die-off typically occurs within 1 to 4 weeks.
Selectivity	Can be selective; some desirable grasses may recover after a setback.	Non-selective; kills most green, actively growing plants it contacts.
Soil Residual	Remains active in the soil for 1–2 seasons to kill germinating seedlings.	No residual activity; does not prevent new seeds from germinating.
Best Timing	September to November to allow uptake before seed set.	Any time the plant is green, actively growing, and stress-free.
Key Risks	Can "bare out" sandy soils; long-term residue concerns.	Creates bare patches that invite new weed germination.
Brand names	Tussock, Surefire flupropanate and GP FluPro	Roundup, Nufarm Glyphosate, Weedmaster Duo.

Situation	Flupropanate	Glyphosate	Flupropanate + Glyphosate
New emergence	Too slow to work on newly emerging plants.	Spot spray when actively growing. Won't inactivate seed.	Spot spray in spring for faster knockdown plus residual impact.
Scattered plants	Spot spray any time of year; residual effect prevents regrowth but is slow to work.	Cheaper, faster result, no residual soil constraints; spot spray when green and actively growing.	Spot spray or wick wiper during spring for faster knockdown plus residual impact.
Small patches	Selective, residual control without killing most improved perennial pastures.	Spot spray only as is non-selective and will impact surrounding pasture.	Spot spray in later spring to stop seed set while Flupropanate handles long-term kill.
Medium density	Works but very slow. Delay resowing until 100 mm leaching rain.	Kills ALG and bulk vegetation quickly. Has a short plant-back period.	Glyphosate kills bulk fast while flupropanate provides residual seedbank suppression. Must be oversown.
Severe infestation	Reduced efficacy in thick unslashed material; slash or graze before spraying.	Often used as a boom spray to reduce bulk and vigour first.	Glyphosate cuts bulk rapidly, flupropanate handles residual control and seedbank.
Preventing seed set in-season	Too slow to prevent current year's seed set.	Wick wipe for 80–90% control. Should be repeated 2-3 times and in opposite directions.	Add glyphosate to flupropanate for seed set suppression when treating large stands.

WARNING: This content is intended as a guide only. Users of agricultural chemicals must always read the label, and any relevant permits, before using the product and strictly comply with the label directions. Flupropanate has been listed as a 'Chemical prioritised for reconsideration' due to its environmental, trade, and human health concerns regarding residues. This review is scheduled for 2028.

Withholding Periods

Before using herbicides it's important to understand the risks and limitations of their application.

Flupropanate

Flupropanate has two Withholding Periods that must be observed consecutively.

Grazing and Cutting WHP (Initial period):

- Spot Spraying: Do not graze or cut for stock feed for at least 14 days after application.
- Blanket Treatment (Boom/Wick): Do not graze or cut for stock feed for 4 months after application.

Slaughter/Lactation WHP (Permanent requirement): Once the initial grazing period has passed, stock must be moved to clean pasture or clean feed for at least 14 days before slaughter.

- This 14-day "clean out" period applies permanently to any area ever treated with flupropanate.
- Note: Do not use flupropanate near waterways or on land used by lactating stock.

Glyphosate

- Grazing WHP: Many labels state no WHP is required, but a delay of 1 to 7 days is often recommended to allow the herbicide to fully circulate through the plant.
- Cutting WHP: Some specific formulations may require 7 days before cutting for stock feed.

Management Plan

Managing infestations is a multi-year commitment, and complete eradication may not be achievable.

1. Learn to identify plants

Use the identification tools to learn how to locate ALG in your paddock.

2. Establish a baseline

Assess your paddocks and document infestations and their severity.

3. Implement farm biosecurity measures

Implement the biosecurity checklist to prevent further seed entry.

4. Develop an integrated weed management plan

Ensure the management methods are appropriate to the infestation.

5. Undertake seasonal monitoring

Monitor the results and undertake follow-up treatment where needed.

6. Consult your agronomist

If you are unsure, consult your agronomist for guidance.





Tom's Creek
Landcare

For more information



Disclaimer: This guide has been produced by Tom's Creek Landcare Group Inc. Care has been taken to ensure the information presented is accurate. We do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaim any liability for any error, loss or other consequences that may arise from you solely relying on the information in this publication. This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational or non-commercial purposes, provided the source is acknowledged. No part may be reproduced for commercial purposes without prior written permission from Toms Creek Landcare Group.