

Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland
The Honourable Tim Mulherin
08/10/2009

Minister again urges help to find devastating weed

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The hunt is still on to find up to 66 damaging weed plants, accidentally sold across Queensland, which could devastate the grazing industry.

Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland Minister Tim Mulherin said the search is reaching a crucial stage with the plants about to release tens of thousands of seeds.

Mr Mulherin said: "Nearly a year ago I warned about Mexican Feather Grass plants which were mistakenly labeled as another grass and sold to Queensland outlets by a Victorian supplier.

"A total of 299 plants went to Queensland outlets which then on-sold 160 without knowing they were in fact a banned weed.

"Biosecurity Queensland launched a major operation to find every last plant and has managed to track down more than three-quarters.

"Unfortunately, there are still 66 Mexican feather grass plants unaccounted for across an area from Mackay in the north, Longreach in the west, and south to the NSW border.

"While some of the remaining 66 plants may have died, I'm again asking people to check their gardens for this dangerous weed.

"Right now those plants still out there are producing masses of seeds.

"Research by Biosecurity Queensland weed scientists has found there are typically 7000 seeds per plant and the viability of those seeds is as high as 90 per cent.

"If Mexican Feather Grass escapes into pasture it could be catastrophic for Queensland's \$13 billion-plus agriculture industry.

"It is a low-protein grass with no grazing value - it would render a paddock worthless.

"It is similar to serrated tussock which costs New South Wales' agriculture more than \$40 million annually.

"Mexican Feather Grass grows to 70cm tall with a straw coloured seed heads.

"Anyone who believes they have seen this plant is urged not to touch it but to call Biosecurity Queensland immediately on 13 25 23.

"Any attempt to move the plant could disturb the seeds which can penetrate clothing making it easy for animals and people to pick it up and spread it further.

"Biosecurity weed scientists are researching Mexican feather grass to learn how fast it spreads.

"As part of their research project, our scientists are also developing chemical and non-chemical control options to aid eradication efforts.

"Hopefully we can wipe out this pest before it takes hold .. but we need the public's help," Mr Mulherin said.

Location	Number of plants sold	Number of plants found	Number of plants still missing
Longreach	4	3	1
Emerald	22	6	16
Goondiwindi	6	3	3
Surat	6	6	0
Kingaroy	12	8	4
Biloela	12	9	3
Mackay	12	2	10
Gympie	6	5	1
Ipswich	6	1	5
Kenmore, Brisbane	12	0	12
Rochedale, Brisbane	2	1	1
Aspley, Brisbane	48	41	7
Nth suburbs, Brisbane	12*	9	3
TOTAL	66		