Marram grass

Calamagrostis arenaria

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Poaceae (grass)

Also known as
Marram grass, European beachgrass

Where is it originally from?
Europe and North Africa

Photo: Trevor James

What does it look like?
Coarse perennial grass forming stiff, hardy, dull grey clumps of erect stems (<1.2 m) growing from a network of thick rhizomes which can grow laterally up to 2 m in six months. One clump can produce 100 new shoots annually. Sharply pointed blue-green leaf blades (<1 m long) are tightly rolled and appear cylindrical. Seedhead spikes (<30 cm long) are cylindrical.

Why is it weedy?
Rapidly spreads and covers dunes.

Photo: Trevor James

How does it spread?
Reproduces vegetatively and from seed. Rhizomes take root when buried and seeds are dispersed by wind and water. Rhizomes tolerate submersion in sea water and can break off and float in the currents to establish the grass at new sites.

What damage does it do?
Changes coastal landforms, producing large steep-faced dunes which are a different shape from the dunes created by native plant, and are prone to erosion, leading to coastal recession and loss of beach nesting sites for shoreline birds. Native grasses such as pingao and spinifex do not compete well against the rapid growth rates and sand gathering.

Photo: Trevor James

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Widely planted for the purpose of sand stabilisation in the past, so well established in sand dunes.

What can I do to get rid of it?
Begin control at windward end of infestation, or where native vegetation is best represented. To prevent rhizome movement, control at eroding sites and prevent physical damage of marram at other sites.
1. Physical removal - Dig out all parts of plant (all year round). Dispose of rhizomes at refuse transfer station or burn.
2. Foliar spray (spring-autumn): Apply Glyphosate (360 g/L active ingredient) herbicide at 15ml/L to cover entire plant. Note: Glyphosate overspray will kill other (desirable) dune grasses. Not for use over water bodies or wetlands - check with your regional council. Use only as directed on label.
CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and directions for the purchase, use and storage of the product, are followed and adhered to.

What can I do to stop it coming back?
Follow up required annually until eradicated.