

Dactylis glomerata

COMMON NAMES

cocksfoot

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Hairless, erect, greyish to bluish green, strongly tufted perennial grass to 1 m tall. **Roots** fibrous. **Leaf** folded when emerging, 100–450 × 2–14 mm, rough towards boat-shaped tip, harsh when old, dull beneath with prominent sharp keel. **Ligule** 2–12 mm long, membranous, often torn. **Sheath** strongly flattened, sharply keeled. **Seedhead** a large panicle, with one-sided clusters of flattened spikelets. **Seeds** with bristly ends.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinctive large pannicle, with one-sided clusters when mature. May be confused with *Poa annua* when young but sheath base is flattened in *D. glomerata* and not in *Poa annua*.

HABITAT

Terrestrial. A plant of coastal, lowland, montane and subalpine habitats (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). Plant grows in scrub and forest margin, shrubland, tussockland, herbfields, fernland, sand dune hollows and riverbeds (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995).

GENUS

Dactylis

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Dactylis glomerata L.

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

YEAR NATURALISED

1867

ORIGIN

Eurasia, Nth Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Agricultural

TOLERANCES

The plant is slightly tolerant to drought, shade and poor drainage and is frost tolerant (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). The plant is able to resprout after physical damage and fire (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995).



Hutt Valley. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 09/07/2006, Licence: CC BY.



Tiller detail. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 06/12/2013, Licence: CC BY-NC.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial. Reproduces by tillars and seed. Seed is dispersed by wind, water, humans and vertebrates (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995).

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

dactylis: From the Greek dactyolos 'a finger', referring to the shape of the panicle

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

NVS CODE

DACGLO

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Timmins SM, Mackenzie IW. 1995. Weeds in New Zealand Protected Natural Areas database. *Department of Conservation Technical Series 8*. Department of Conservation, Wellington, NZ. 282 p.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/dactylis-glomerata/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026