Festuca rubra subsp. rubra

COMMON NAMES
red fescue

BIOSTATUS
Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS
Not applicable

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Tufted perennial grass spreading from rhizomes. **Leaves** arise from the base and have sheath 3–7 cm, often with bright red veins, and an almost glabrous blade of 5–25 cm long and 0.5–2 mm wide, dark to bluish green. Knob-like swellings at junction of blade and sheath. **Flowering culm** up to 45 cm tall, panicle usually 5–10 cm tall, closely held clusters of spikelets.

Festuca rubra subsp. rubra. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
F. novae-zealandae is similar but has more wiry leaf blades up to 60 cm long.

Festuca rubra subsp. rubra. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

HABITAT
Terrestrial.

GENUS
Festuca

FAMILY
Poaceae

AUTHORITY
Festuca rubra L. subsp. rubra

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

YEAR NATURALISED
1872

ORIGIN
Europe

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
Agricultural.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACU: Facultative Upland
Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY
festuca: From the Latin festuca ‘stem’ or ‘blade of grass’
rubra: Red

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

FESRSR

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/festuca-rubra-subsp-rubra/

PDF DATE

27 May 2026