

Myosurus minimus subsp. novae-zelandiae

COMMON NAMES

New Zealand mousetail

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, EF, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Spring to summer-green annual, forming tufts 10–80mm tall. **Leaves** 5–20, 10–35 × 1–2.5 mm, basal, fleshy to succulent, exstipulate, linear to linear-spathulate, obtuse, margins entire, bright to dark green, yellow-green, red-green or red. **Inflorescences** scapigerous, scapes 1–8, 1-flowered, 10–80 mm tall (including receptacle), erect to spreading, glabrous, fleshy, filiform, bright to dark green, yellow-green, red-green or red. **Flowers** greenish-yellow, apetalous. **Sepals** 5, minute, 0.5–0.8 mm long, 3-nerved, ovate to oblanceolate, green to greenish-yellow or green-red, **Stamens** 5, filaments 0.3–0.5mm long, greenish-white. **Receptacle** 3–15 mm long, elongating in fruit, oblong to oblong-linear, bearing numerous carpels. **Styles** 0.4–0.5 mm long. **Achenes** 20–50 (or more), 0.9–1.6 mm long, boat-shaped, body oblong to narrow-oblong, broader at apex, surface glabrous, dull, pale brown, yellow-brown to dark brown, beak 0.4 mm long. **Seed** 0.55–0.90mm, narrowly elliptic to elliptic, surface finely rugulose, semi-glossy, brown to dark brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

May be confused with *Limosella australis* R.Br. from which it differs by its greenish-yellow rather than white, lilac to pink flowers and by the conspicuous, elongated receptacles which bear numerous carpels (rather than the solitary subglobose capsules produced by *L. australis*). It may also be confused with *Plantago coronopus* L., which differs from mousetail by its dark green to brown-green, usually 1–4 lobed linear leaves, sparsely hairy leaves, and many flowered spikes.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (formerly reported from the Hawke's Bay to Cape Palliser and Island Bay near Wellington, places where it is now believed extinct), South Island (known only from the eastern side, from Marlborough south to Lake Manapouri).

HABITAT

Lowland to upland. Damp and slightly salty depressions in pastures and short tussock grassland, on the margins of tarn and kettle holes, and in damp dune hollows, gravel flats and alluvium.



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THREATS

Mousetail is probably a biologically sparse entity. However, virtually all of its known habitats are now being invaded by faster growing, taller or turf forming, perennial weeds such as *Plantago coronopus*. These weed invasions appear to be accelerated by changes in the surrounding hydrology, caused in turn, by changes in land use. In particular, the conversion of upland mixed sheep/cattle and sheep farms to dairy farms, especially within Canterbury and Otago, has increased the need for ground water. Canalisation and the widespread use of bore water is now visibly reducing the number of ephemeral wetlands, kettle holes and tarns once frequented by mousetail and other marginal turf plants.

GENUS

Myosurus

FAMILY

Ranunculaceae

AUTHORITY

Myosurus minimus subsp. novae-zelandiae (W.R.B.Oliv.) Garn.-Jones

SYNONYMS

Myosurus novae-zelandiae W.R.B.Oliv., M. minimus L. subsp. minimus

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

August–November–(January)

FRUITING

September–February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

A strict annual, easily grown from fresh seed. It does best in a small pot, partially submerged in water.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

minimus: Smallest (rather a misnomer)

novae-zelandiae: Of New Zealand

NVS CODE

MYOMSN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 16

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, EF, RR, Sp

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP, EF, RR, Sp

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: EF, Sp

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: EF, NR, NStr, PF, RR Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the “Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025” Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange PJ, Heenan PB, Norton DA, Rolfe JR, Sawyer JWD. 2010. Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch. 471 p.
Ogle CC. 1985. Mouse-tail *Myosurus novae-zelandiae* a declining species? Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin 42: 57–61.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for the NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2006. Description by P.J. de Lange and subsequently published in de Lange et al. (2010).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myosurus-minimus-subsp-novae-zelandiae/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myosurus-minimus-subsp-novae-zelandiae/>

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