

# Rytidosperma horrens

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: DPT, RR

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## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

## FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Diminutive, tufted, bright green tussock with persistent, stramineous leaves below shoots of 3–4 conspicuously divergent leaf blades.

**Branching** intravaginal. **Leaf-sheath** 10–15 mm, glabrous, ridged, becoming stramineous; collar thickened, paler beneath sheath; apical tuft 0.5–1.5 mm, sparse. **Ligule** a very narrow row of hairs c. 0.25 mm long.

**Leaf-blade** 25–30 × 0.5 mm, ± terete; persistent, weakly disarticulating at ligule; glabrous below except keel hairy apically; upper surface with numerous small white prickles on nerves; margin glabrous. **Culm** to 120 mm, internodes 40–60 mm. **Inflorescence** racemose of 2–5, widely spaced, solitary, overlapping spikelets on very finely toothed pedicels 2–5 mm long, rachis very finely toothed. **Spikelets** 6–8 mm long, 3–5 florets in each; awns exserted. **Glumes** equal, j± ovate-acute 5–6 mm, glabrous, bright green centrally, margins hyaline sometimes tinged purple below, faintly toothed above, apex finely ciliate, nerves confluent; upper 5-nerved, lower 3-nerved, upper surface with abundant small, white hairs. **Lemma** 2 mm, bright green, 7-nerved, nerves anastomising below sinus; upper row of hairs only in marginal tufts, 0.75 mm, ≥ sinus, 0.5 mm, not reaching upper marginal tufts, other glabrous; lemma lobes 1.5–2.5 mm, ≥ lemma, abruptly produced into 1.0–1.5 mm long awns, reflexed from twisting column 1 mm. **Callus** 0.25 mm, rounded, marginal hair tufts 0.4–0.5 mm, hairs 1–2 = to lodicule; nerved, cuneate and lobed. **Anthers** 0.7–1.0 mm, yellow, apiculate, exserted. **Ovary** 0.5–0.8 mm, obovoid, stipitate, stigma-style 1.20–1.75 mm, exserted. **Seed** 1.40–1.50 × 0.75 mm, obovate.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Exact relationships to other New Zealand bristle grasses is unclear. It has many of the features of the rather obviously unrelated *R. merum* Connor et Edgar from which it is easily distinguished by its smaller size, and much shorter inflorescences which do not elongate. The lateral lemma lobes are 1.5–2.5 mm rather than 3–8 mm long, the central awn 1.5–2.5 mm rather than 6.5–14 mm, spaced 1 mm rather than 2.5–3.5 mm away from the twisting column.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (upper Maitland Catchment, Lake Ohau).



## HABITAT

Subalpine (1200 m a.s.l.). Recorded from wet flushes and tarn margins where it is a sparse to locally common component of short, dense, vegetation.

## THREATS

Recent (2009) surveys have found *Rytidosperma horrens* to be locally common over a large area west of Lake Ohau. In future listings this species is likely to be regarded as Naturally Uncommon.

## GENUS

*Rytidosperma*

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Rytidosperma horrens* Connor et Molloy

## SYNONYMS

None

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

January

## FRUITING

April

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Has been cultivated, and flowered and set seed in Auckland and Lincoln. A small and unremarkable grass unlikely to prove popular in cultivation.

## ETYMOLOGY

**rytidosperma:** Wrinkled seed

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to the grasses of New Zealand](#)

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 24

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: RR, St

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR

2009 | Data Deficient

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, 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

Molloy BPJ, Connor HE. 2005. Species novae graminum Novae-Zelandiae III. Two diploid species of *Rytidosperma* (Danthonieae: Danthonioideae). *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 43: 721–734.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.2005.9512986>.

## ATTRIBUTION

Description modified from Molloy and Connor (2005).

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/rytidosperma-horrens/>

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026