



The Derwent  
Catchment Project  
Increasing Productivity. Restoring Landscapes

## Seeds of frustration – annual grass weeds

Seed heads blowing in the breeze in a grazed pasture can tell us a great deal. Not only about how much feed is left ungrazed at the end of a good season, but also about the weeds in the paddock that will likely command our attention.

Stock are not particularly interested in the seed heads of many irritating annual grasses. Their presence is a standing reminder of rejected feed, soon to be trampled trash under the feet of selective grazers seeking tastier morsels. This unused growth takes water and nutrients away from more desirable species. It's a double whammy.

For some weed species, even when they are growing, feed quality is limited by too little leaf and too much fibrous stem. Sometimes even that low proportion of leaf will be less palatable, reducing feed intake. They also often come with spiky seeds that cause problems for livestock and livestock products.

It's an unfortunate fact that by the time you can see annual grass seed heads it's often too late to do much about them. But the seed heads do make it easier to identify the species to which they belong, where they are and what proportion of the paddock they occupy. We can then devise a plan for reducing their impact and encouraging more desirable species, and stop them in their tracks in the future. Alternatively, we may choose to simply live with the problems, but plan to make the best of the existing pasture's strengths.

### Weeds to watch out for

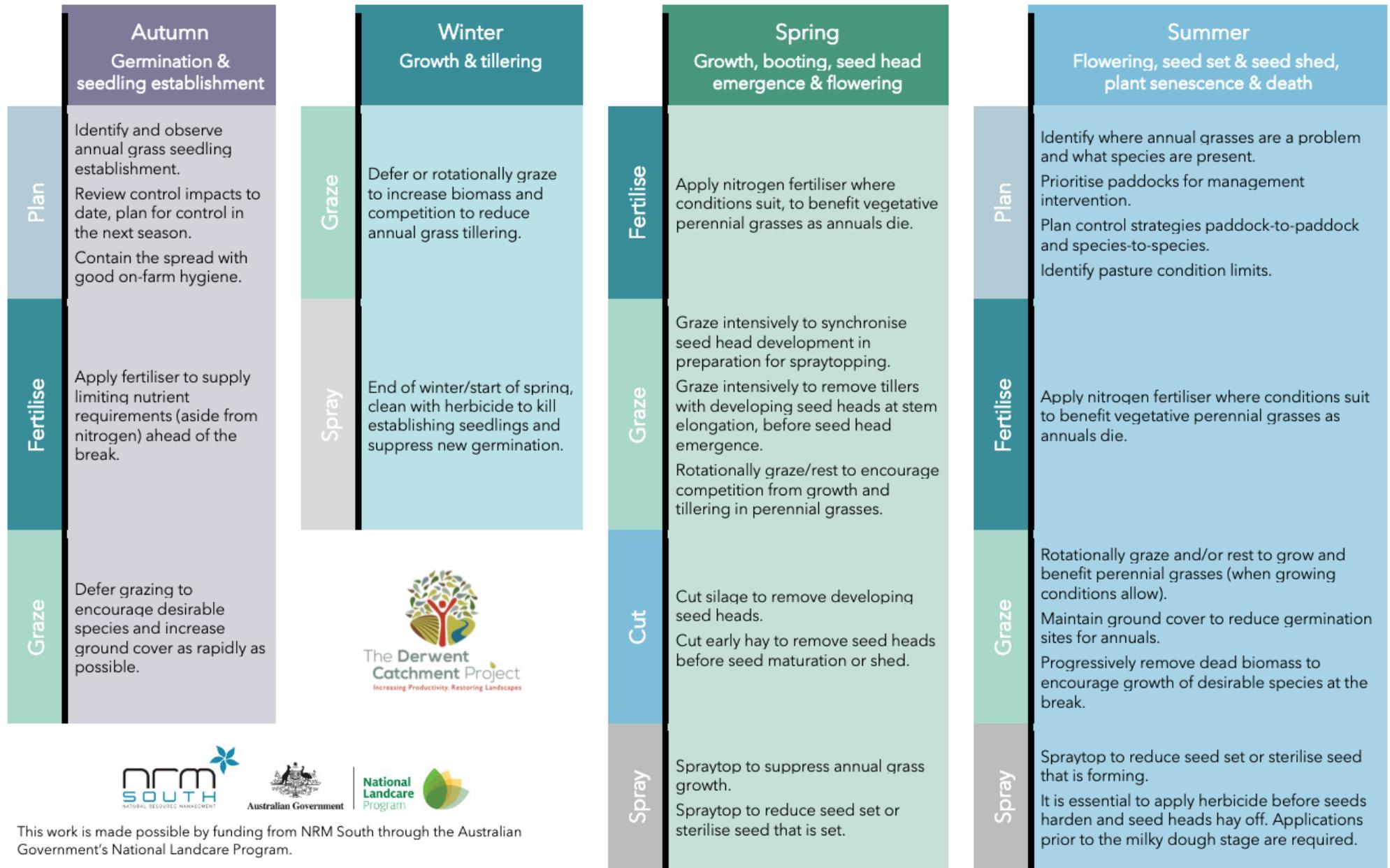
Barley grass, vulpia, great brome (introduced spear grass) and soft brome are the most prolific and likely seed head owners.

### Management options

- Use grazing and fertiliser management strategies to give desirable plants an advantage
- Limit opportunities for weed germination on bare ground
- Put pressure on establishing weed seedlings with grazing or chemical tools
- Use grazing to suppress or synchronise the development of seed heads
- Chemically sterilise seeds as they develop
- Cut and remove seed heads before seed sheds
- Embark on a resowing program

But always start by assessing the problem, and prioritise. Overleaf is a timeline showing some management options throughout the year.

## Pasture timeline: Tactics for managing annual grasses in an existing pasture



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**Build momentum for annual grass weed control:** combine tactics; tailor to the species you have; repeat across successive years; adapt to each season; exploit growing seasons.