



# AGROSTIS AVENACEA

## Blown Grass

A tufted annual. *Culms* 15–70 cm tall, erect or spreading, smooth, but becoming very rough below the inflorescence, without hairs, rather slender. *Nodes* about 4, dark, hairless. *Leaves* basal and on the culm. *Leaf sheaths* becoming loose in the upper part, striate, slightly rough, hairless. *Ligule* up to 3.5 mm long, membranous. *Leaf blades* flat, 8–25 cm long and up to 3 mm broad, tapering from above the middle to a point.

*Inflorescence* an open, rather delicate panicle with broadly spreading, fine primary and secondary branches, mostly arising in clusters along the axis, downwardly rough, at first the lower part not exerted from the upper leaf sheath, but becoming fully exerted at maturity. *Spikelets* (S) solitary, on slender pedicels 1–5 mm long, borne mostly on the periphery of the panicle towards the ends of the branches, 2.5 mm long, at maturity breaking up above the persistent glumes. *Floret* 1, bisexual. *Glumes* ( $G_1$ ,  $G_2$ ) slightly unequal, the length of the spikelet, membranous, 1-nerved, keeled, slightly rough down the back of the nerve; the lower glume ( $G_1$ ) slightly longer than the upper ( $G_2$ ) and slightly keeled. *Lemma* (L) about  $\frac{3}{4}$  the length of the glumes, membranous, though densely clothed on its back with straight hairs, 5-nerved, truncate and 4-pointed, the central nerve produced into a straight, twisted awn, 4 mm long, which is attached to the back about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the way down from the tip. *Palea* (P) about  $\frac{3}{4}$  the length of the lemma, membranous, faintly 2-nerved and keeled. *Anthers* 3, 0.2 mm long.

This grass is fairly common as a winter and spring-growing species. In Queensland, it is largely confined to the southeast, particularly the Darling Downs, highlands and border areas. It is eaten by stock, though it is not usually prolific enough to be of great significance as forage. Its spreading, straw-coloured panicle with persistent glumes, which is easily blown by the wind, makes it distinctive at a time when most other grasses are not flowering.

### REFERENCES

Bailey (1902),<sup>1</sup> p. 1883 (as *Deyeuxia* spp.); Vickery (1941),<sup>2</sup> (Key to Australian species); Gardner (1952),<sup>3</sup> pp. 151–56; Burbidge and Gray (1970),<sup>4</sup> pp. 44–45; Willis (1970),<sup>5</sup> pp. 143–48; Beadle *et al.* (1972),<sup>6</sup> pp. 651–52; Black (1978),<sup>7</sup> pp. 170–73; Jessop (1981),<sup>8</sup> p. 435.

### KEY TO SPECIES

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| 1. Lemma distinctly awned. | 2 |
| Lemma awnless.             | 3 |

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| <p>2. Spikelets 2–4 mm long, not usually purple-tinged. Anthers 0.2–0.4 mm long. Leaf blades narrow, about 2 mm wide. Panicle branches somewhat drooping when young (blown grass)</p> <p>Spikelets 3.5–6 (usually 5) mm long, usually strongly purple-tinged. Anthers 0.6–1.2 mm long. Leaf blades 2.7 mm wide. Panicle branches erect or stiffly spreading (blown grass)</p> | <p><i>A. avenacea</i><sup>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8</sup></p>  |
| <p>3. Panicle diffuse with long capillary branches; palea absent. Plants tufted (winter bent)</p> <p>Panicle more or less open, but not diffuse; palea present, about ½ length of lemma.</p>  | <p><i>A. aemula</i><sup>1,2,3,4,5,6,7</sup></p> <p><i>A. hiemalis</i><sup>2,4,5,6</sup></p> <p>4</p> |
| <p>4. Rhizomatous; ligule truncate. Panicle up to 25 cm long (black or redtop bent)</p> <p>Stoloniferous; ligule pointed. Panicle up to 13 cm long (creeping bent)</p>  | <p><i>A. gigantea</i><sup>3,4,5,6,7</sup></p> <p><i>A. stolonifera</i><sup>3,5,6</sup></p>           |