



HORDEUM LEPORINUM

Barley Grass

A spreading annual, up to 30 cm tall. *Culms* spreading from the base, where they are also freely branched, smooth, without hairs, striate. *Nodes* mostly concealed by the leaf sheaths. *Leaves* basal and on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* smooth, rather loose and becoming straw-coloured and papery at maturity. *Ligule* a narrow membranous collar. *Leaf blades* up to 20 cm long, 3–5 mm wide, tapering from near the base to a point, the base with curved auricles or ears clasping the culm, both surfaces more or less sparsely covered with soft hairs.

Inflorescence a dense spike, 5–9 cm long, often partly enclosed by the inflated sheath of the uppermost leaf. *Spikelets* (S) 2–3 cm long (including awns), usually in threes, alternating along either side of the axis, the central spikelet of each triplet sessile and fertile, the 2 lateral ones on short pedicels, usually male, slightly longer and narrower, the inflorescence axis disarticulating at maturity with the spikelet trios falling entire. *Floret* 1, bisexual in the central spikelet, male in the laterals, the short stalk on which the fertile floret is borne usually produced into a long bristle exceeding the floret, very occasionally bearing a rudimentary upper floret. *Glumes* (G_1 , G_2) similar, very narrow and hardened, the lower glume (G_1) shorter than the upper (G_2), covered on the back and awns with upward-pointing spines, the margins with erect hairs, the tip extended into a rough awn, 1–3-nerved in the central spikelet, 1-nerved in the laterals. *Lemma* (L) 5–7-nerved, thickened and hardened, broader in the central spikelet, the tip extended into a long awn, which is very rough downwardly to the touch. *Palea* (P) narrow, hardened, 2-nerved and 2-keeled, the tip truncate between the nerves. *Anthers* 3, 1.5 mm long.

This is a weed species of the southern Darling Downs that provides useful feed in the early spring, but its acceptance by stock declines rapidly towards maturity. It is found most commonly around stockyards and stock camps where fertility is high. It can be a serious pest when it is abundant, since the seeds often work under the eyelids of sheep and lambs, causing severe eye inflammation and damage.

REFERENCES

Bailey (1902),¹ p. 1921 (as *Hordeum* spp.); Gardner (1952),² pp. 198–201; Burbidge and Gray (1970),³ pp. 56–58; Willis (1970),⁴ pp. 120–21; Beadle *et al.* (1972),⁵ p. 639; Black (1978),⁶ pp. 140–42; Jessop (1981),⁷ p. 433.

KEY TO SPECIES

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| 1. Leaves without auricles. | 2 |
| Leaves with prominent auricles. | 3 |
| 2. Lateral spikelets with both glumes similar and bristle-like
(Mediterranean barley grass) | <i>H. geniculatum</i> ^{3,4,5,6}
(<i>hystrix</i>) |

- Lateral spikelets with glumes dissimilar, one bristle-like, the other broader in lower part (sea barley grass) *H. marinum*^{2,3,6}
3. Inflorescence not breaking up at maturity. Cultivated barley. 4
 Inflorescence breaking up at maturity. Wild species. 5
4. Central spikelet of each triad fertile (two-row barley) *H. distichon*²
 All 3 spikelets of each triad fertile (six-row or four-row barley) *H. vulgare*^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7}
5. Anthers of central spikelet usually black, less than 0.6 mm long, not exerted at maturity (northern barley grass) *H. glaucum*^{6,7}
 Anthers of central spikelet pale in colour, more than 1 mm long, exerted at maturity (barley grass) *H. leporinum*^{1,3,4,5,6,7}