



# VULPIA BROMOIDES

## Squirrel-tail Fescue

Annual, 5–60 cm tall. *Culms* loosely tufted or solitary, erect or ascending from a bent or prostrate base, very slender, rather stiff, often branched in the lower part. *Nodes* 2–4, smooth and hairless. *Leaves* basal and on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* slightly keeled, faintly rough down the keel. *Ligule* membranous, up to 0.5 mm long. *Leaf blades* finely pointed, 1–15 cm long, 0.5–3 mm wide, flat or rolled, lax to rather stiff, rough near the tip and on the margins, minutely hairy above.

*Inflorescence* a rather narrow panicle, well exerted from the uppermost leaf sheath, erect or slightly nodding, tending to be one-sided, 1–10 cm long, in impoverished specimens reduced to a raceme or even a single spikelet, green or purplish, the axis rough, the branches erect or slightly spreading. *Spikelets* (S) 7–14 mm long, wedge-shaped, breaking up at maturity above the glumes and between the florets. *Florets* 5–10, all bisexual and similar, partly overlapping in the spikelet. *Glumes* (G<sub>1</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>) persisting, finely pointed, shorter than the spikelet, unequal, membranous; the lower glume (G<sub>1</sub>) 3–6 mm long,  $\frac{3}{4}$  the length of the upper, 1-nerved; the upper (G<sub>2</sub>) 6–10 mm long, 3-nerved. *Lemmas* (L) firm, 5–9 mm long, 5-nerved, the tip produced into a fine, rough awn up to 13 mm long. *Paleas* (P) slightly shorter than the lemmas, 2-nerved and 2-keeled, rough on the back of the keels. *Anther* usually 1, 0.3–0.6 mm long.

This is a winter-growing grass found in the southern, moister parts of eastern Queensland, particularly on the Darling Downs and border areas. It is often found together with *V. myuros*, both of which may provide some winter foraging. It flowers profusely in spring, matures and dies, thus falling off rapidly in its nutritive value.

### REFERENCES

Bailey (1902),<sup>1</sup> p. 1917 (as *Festuca* spp.); Gardner (1952),<sup>2</sup> pp. 89–91; Burbidge and Gray (1970),<sup>3</sup> p. 26; Willis (1970),<sup>4</sup> pp. 104–5; Beadle *et al.* (1972),<sup>5</sup> p. 633; Black (1978),<sup>6</sup> pp. 159–61; Tutin (1980),<sup>7</sup> pp. 154–56; Jessop (1981),<sup>8</sup> p. 431.

### KEY TO SPECIES

1. Upper glume twice as long as lower glume, 3-nerved.  
Panicle short, exerted from sheath (squirrel-tail fescue) *V. bromoides*<sup>1,2,3,4,5,6</sup>  
Upper glume 3–4 times as long as lower glume, 1-nerved.  
Panicle long, barely exerted from sheath. 2
2. Lemmas glabrous on margins near apex. 3  
Lemmas hairy on margins near apex. *V. megalura*<sup>3,4,5,6</sup>
3. Inflorescence usually not fully exerted from uppermost leaf sheath. Lower glume  $\frac{1}{10}$ – $\frac{2}{5}$  as long as upper (rat's-tail fescue) *V. myuros*<sup>2,3,4,5,6,8</sup>  
Inflorescence usually well exerted from uppermost leaf sheath. Lower glume  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  as long as upper. *V. muralis*<sup>7</sup>