

Identification

Stems slender, commonly reddish or purplish, smooth, shiny bent, finely ribbed, erectly branching from nodes.

Leaves Flat or folded along the midrib, 5-30 cm long, 2.5-5.5 mm wide.

Seedhead 1-6 slender "spikes" clustered at the top of the stem and often borne closely so as to appear as a single unit, spikes 5-10 cm long, purplish or dark coloured.

Seeds 7mm long, appearing fringed by spreading hairs of the spike axis also bearing short hairs on the lower half. Conspicuous pit in the upper half. (see photo a). Awns 3-4 times as long as the seed, twisted and bent.

Flowering summer autumn.

Perennial C4 tussock grass, 30-100 cm high. Debate rages over its palatability and protein content. Our experience has been that it is possible to fatten cattle on red grass, before the grass sets seed. Palatability turns off at this stage. An excellent soil conditioner, often the first species to appear after ploughing or heavy stocking rates. I have observed red grass respond to 3mm rainfall after 50 days of zero rain. When harvested, the seeds have a distinct black soot over them with a pungent odour.

Red Grass

Bothriachloa macra

