

## What is CHILEAN NEEDLE GRASS?

- Chilean needle grass is an erect, tufted, perennial grass, which can grow up to one metre high in the absence of grazing.
- It originates from South America and was probably introduced into New Zealand through imported seed.
- It produces two forms of seed - aerial seed and cleistogenes (found at base of plant).
- Aerial flower heads produce large amounts of seed between November and January.
- This aerial seed has a needle sharp point when mature and adheres to wool, hair, leather and clothes. It will catch onto a moving object, and then drop off later to germinate in new areas.
- The aerial seed bores into the eyes and pelts of grazing animals, particularly sheep.
- Chilean needle grass can be managed effectively in small infestations.
- *Severe Chilean needle grass infestations result in economic loss due to the reduced welfare of stock, pelt damage, wool contamination, the inability to sell hay, silage or baleage and the inability to grow grass for seed and some crops.*
- *The direct result is a loss in grazing and trading opportunities, a general disruption to farm management and an overall reduction in farm value.*
- Approximately 3000ha of land in Marlborough has some level of needle grass infestation.



Aerial seed of Chilean needle grass.

Photos: M. Slay



Enlargement of mature seed showing its sharp point and corkscrew tail.

## PREVENTING THE SPREAD of Chilean Needle Grass Seed

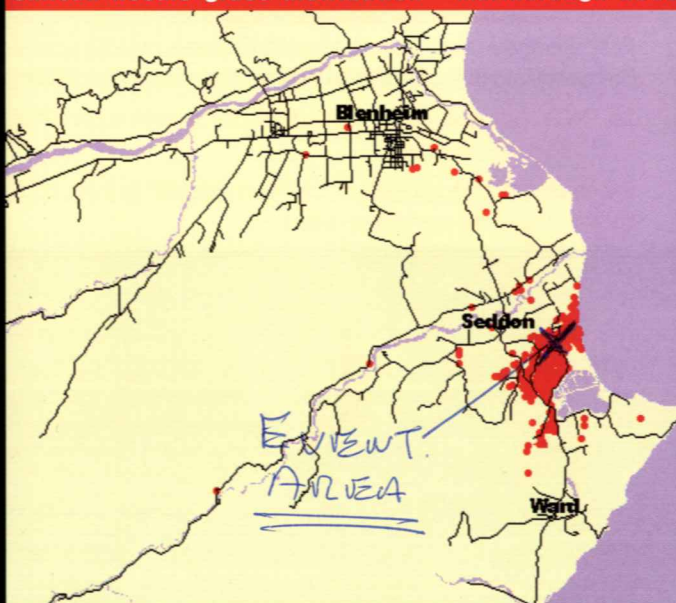
### Hay Production

- Hay, and potentially silage and baleage, has proved to be an efficient means of spread for Chilean needle grass seed.
- There is a high risk of Chilean needle grass seed being spread in hay and on haymaking machinery.

To prevent the spread of Chilean needle grass seed through hay, silage, or baleage:

- **DO NOT** allow any haymaking machinery onto your property unless it has been cleaned and inspected.
- **DO NOT** buy OR sell hay or other stock feed made from pasture containing Chilean needle grass.
- **DO** clean and inspect all machinery after making hay in pasture containing Chilean needle grass, before it is moved to other properties.
- **DO** feed hay, silage and baleage with possible Chilean needle grass seed contamination, in specific locations so the area can be easily inspected for any Chilean needle grass seed germination which may occur.

### Chilean needle grass distribution - Marlborough 2003



### Movement of Stock

- The sticky, sharp seed of Chilean needle grass sticks to the wool of sheep and bores into the pelts of grazing animals.
- Chilean needle grass seed may remain viable after travelling through the gut of grazing animals.

To prevent the spread of Chilean needle grass seed through animal movements:

- **DO NOT** move stock from infested areas to clear areas in wet conditions. Wet soil can stick to animals feet and spread Chilean needle grass seed to new areas.
- **DO NOT** graze sheep on pasture containing Chilean needle grass between November and January. Cattle are less susceptible to injury from Chilean needle grass seed, but they still have the potential to spread seed.
- **DO** shear sheep, including their hocks, if they have been grazing on pasture containing Chilean needle grass, before they are moved to clear areas or sold for slaughter.
- **DO** empty out all stock, which have been grazing on pasture containing Chilean needle grass, before they are moved to clear areas or sold for slaughter.

### Chilean needle grass seeds in sheep meat

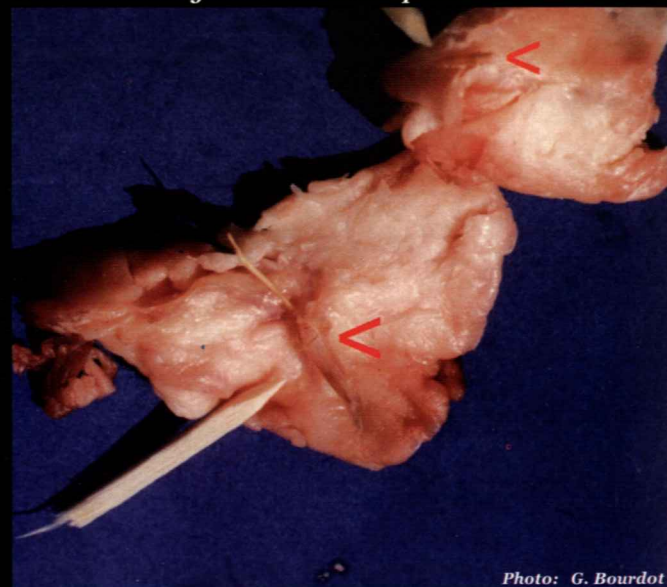


Photo: G. Bourdot