

**NOTE ON THE CONTROL OF FOXTAIL GRASS  
(*PENNISETUM POLYSTACHYON* (L) SCHULT)**

**M. Watson**

*(Actg. Head, Agronomy Division, TRI Low Country Station,  
Ratnapura, Sri Lanka)*

This species of Foxtail grass is a common sight today in all low and mid country districts. The grass is said to have been introduced to Sri Lanka along with the grain of cereals or fodder grasses, and was first observed at Melsiripura in 1966. Since then it has spread over extensive areas, and has presently become a nuisance in tea plantations.

The main means of propagation is by seed. Each inflorescence on a plant carries 250 - 750 spikelets (seeds) which are easily dispersed by wind.

Foxtail grass may be controlled by spraying Diuron\* at a dilution of 20 g of trade product (80% a.i.) in 10 l (0.6 oz. in 2 galls.) water. For effective control plants should be sprayed when they are 45 cm (18") high or smaller, and prior to emergence of inflorescence or flowering. Phytotoxic effects are seen within a week of spraying and a complete kill is obtained in 2 - 3 weeks. The spray will not kill mature plants in flower. Spraying of tall mature plants also entails a greater hazard to operator and the crop due to spray drift, and is not recommended. Mature foxtail plants should be cut back and the regrowth sprayed. It is important to ensure a good coverage of the foliage while spraying. A wetting agent e.g. Surfactant 'N' may be added to the spray solution at 20 ml/10 l (0.6 fl. oz./2 galls).

Foxtail grass could also be controlled by Glyphosate (Roundup) which however is very expensive.

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\* Marketed as Karmex, Harcros Diuron 80, Diuron 80% WP

Herbicides such as Paraquat (Grammoxone) and Dalapon (Basfapon) have been found to be ineffective.

The main strategy of control should be to prevent the grass from flowering. This could be done even by slashing the plants. Attempts to control foxtail grass would prove futile where adjoining areas e.g. ravines, are neglected. A concerted effort is required to prevent the grass becoming a major weed pest in tea plantation.