Horsetails (Equisetum spp.)

- An upright, perennial plant with jointed aerial stems.
- Has the appearance of miniature bamboo.
- Has the potential to reduce crop yields and impact livestock.
- Early detection helps protect Queensland’s agricultural industries and natural environment.

Description

Native to much of the world including Europe, North America and Asia, horsetails includes about 30 difference species in the genus Equisetum. Horsetails prefer disturbed areas and moist habitats such as edges of lakes, rivers and creeks, ditches, seepage areas, meadows, pastures, marshes, and wet woodlands.

It can greatly reduce crop yields, impact native environments, and the consumption of Equisetum by livestock can result in fatal poisoning. It also has the potential to escape cultivation and become a serious invasive plant.

Horsetails is an upright, non-flowering perennial plant that can grow up to 1.5 m high. Leaves are non-photosynthetic, grow in whorls of 6–18 on the main shoots, are fused part of length into nodal sheaths. Stems are green, hollow, jointed, ridged, with sometimes three but usually 6–40 ridges. Fruiting cones 1–4 cm long grow at ends of the stems and produce pale-greenish to yellow spores. Many horsetails have the appearance of miniature bamboo.

Pest risk

Horsetails is a prohibited invasive plant under the Biosecurity Act 2014. Prohibited species must be reported immediately to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23. It must not be introduced, kept, moved, supplied, or released into the environment.

What should I do?

If you think you have seen horsetails, report it to Biosecurity Queensland immediately on 13 25 23. Until an authorised officer contacts you, take reasonable and practical measures to prevent it from spreading.

Further information

Further information is available from your local government office, or by contacting Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit our website at biosecurity.qld.gov.au.