

# Is it Salt?



## *How to recognise dryland salinity in North East Victoria*

*Dryland salinity occurs when rainfall leaks through the soil into the groundwater system. Water tables then rise, bringing saline groundwater close to the land surface.*

*Salinity is a growing challenge for north east Victorian communities.*

*So, how do you know if you have it ?*

*Use this brochure when you are looking at unusual patches in your paddock and wondering...*

*is it salt ?*

# What Salinity looks like

*Below are examples of saline discharge areas from a variety of sites in north east Victoria.*

*Both these sites have struggling pasture with patches of bare ground.*



*Dead trees in a saline drainage line* ▶

*Bare patches in a crop* ▼



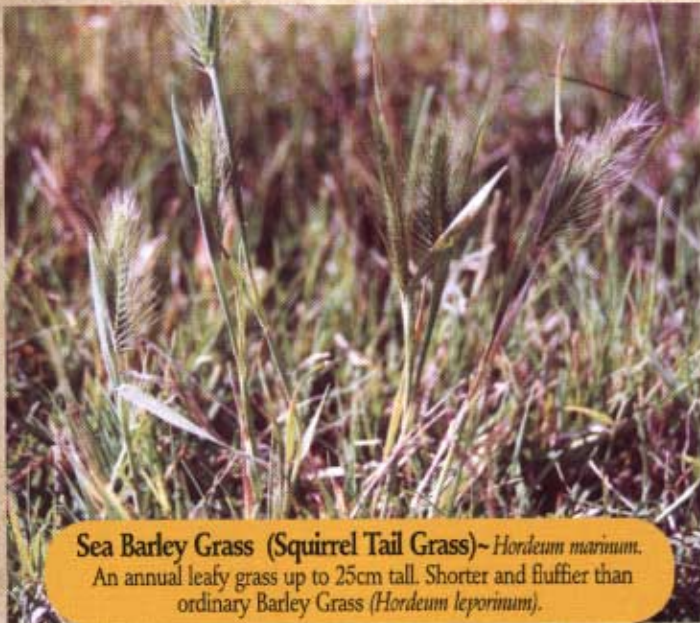
**Salt Crystals**

*In dry seasons salt crystals may be visible on the soil surface. Stock will sometimes lick the ground as if it was a salt block.* ▶

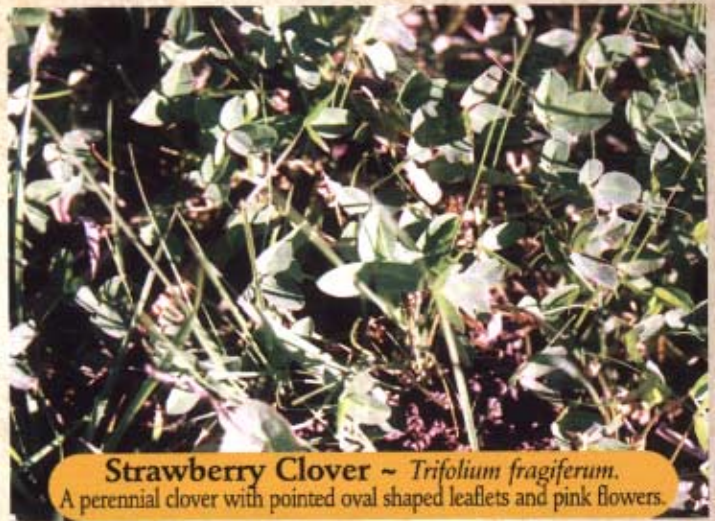


# Plants to Watch Out for

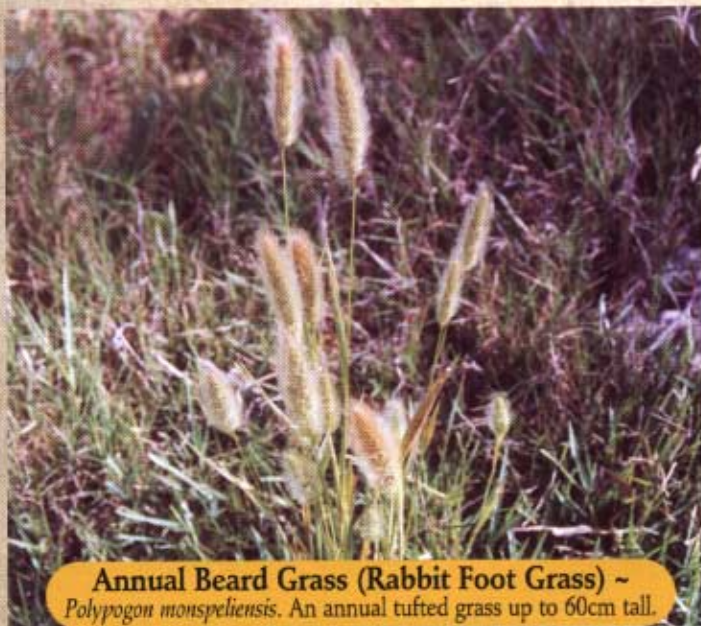
Often the first sign of a developing salinity problem is a change in vegetation.  
Keep an eye out for these salt indicator plants.



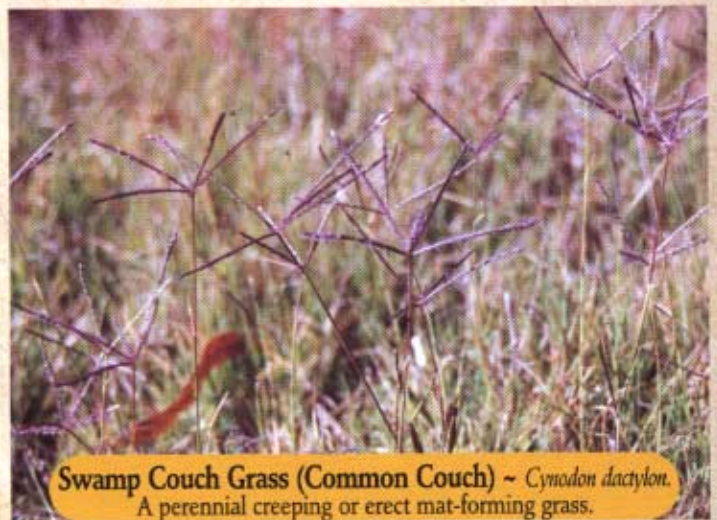
**Sea Barley Grass (Squirrel Tail Grass) ~ *Hordeum marinum*.**  
An annual leafy grass up to 25cm tall. Shorter and fluffier than ordinary Barley Grass (*Hordeum leporinum*).



**Strawberry Clover ~ *Trifolium fragiferum*.**  
A perennial clover with pointed oval shaped leaflets and pink flowers.



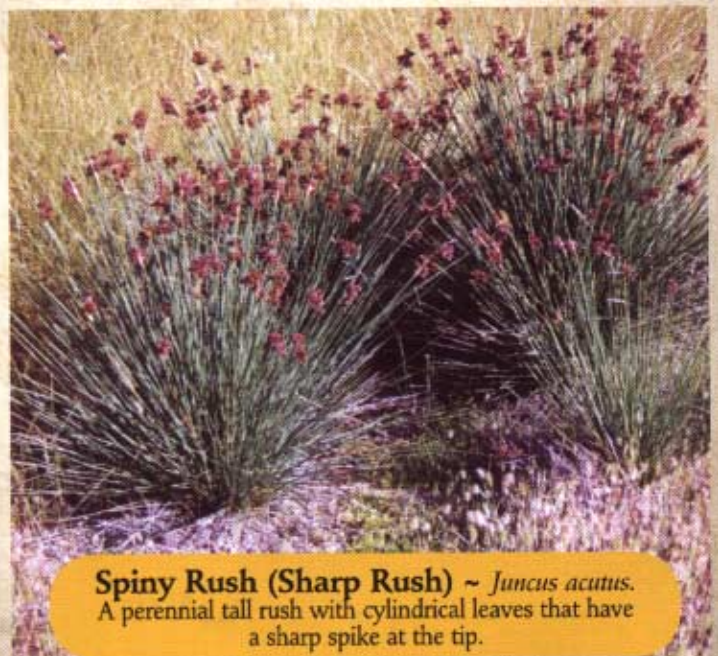
**Annual Beard Grass (Rabbit Foot Grass) ~ *Polygogon monspeliensis*.**  
An annual tufted grass up to 60cm tall.



**Swamp Couch Grass (Common Couch) ~ *Cynodon dactylon*.**  
A perennial creeping or erect mat-forming grass.



**Water Buttons ~ *Cotula coronopifolia*.**  
A perennial low growing spreading herb with yellow flowers.



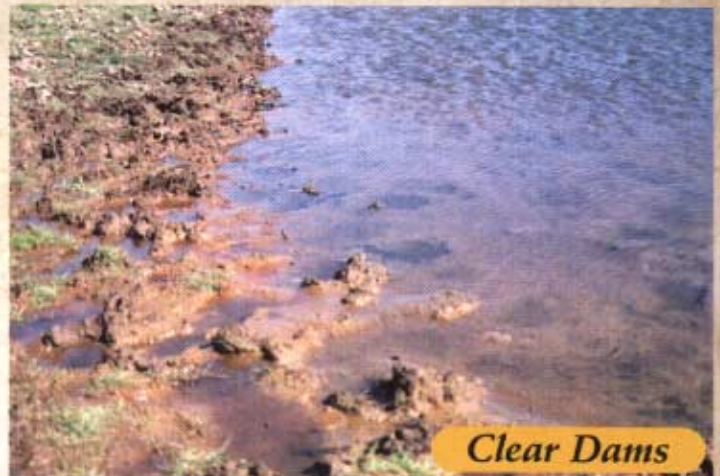
**Spiny Rush (Sharp Rush) ~ *Juncus acutus*.**  
A perennial tall rush with cylindrical leaves that have a sharp spike at the tip.

# Other Indicators



**Rust**

*Salty water encourages rusting in windmills and fences.*



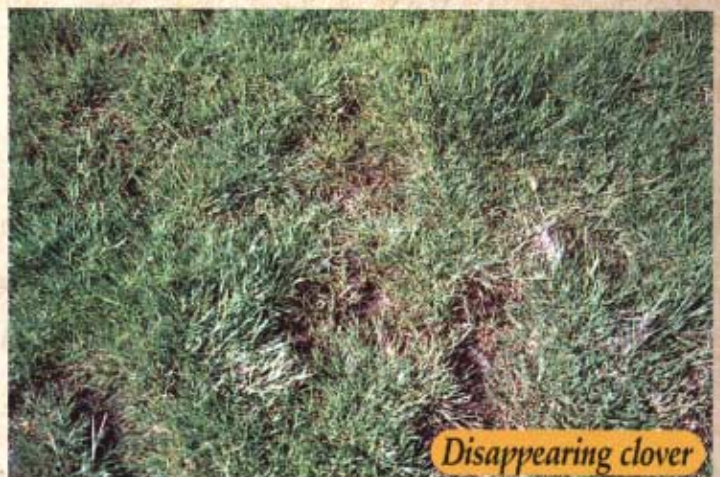
**Clear Dams**

*Salt makes clay particles clump together and sink. Suspiciously clear dams may mean high salt concentrations.*



**Waterlogging**

*"Wet" areas may also be salty areas. Check for salt indicator plants.*



**Disappearing clover**

*White and subterranean clover are very sensitive to salt.*

*All these indicators should be used as guides only in salinity recognition.*

*Text and photographs by Catherine Allan and Ian Gamble*

## For further information contact

Peter Ockenden  
DNRE WANGARATTA  
Phone 03 5720 1750

Ian Gamble  
DNRE WANGARATTA  
Phone 03 5720 1750

Kylie Roberts  
DNRE WODONGA  
Phone 02 6055 6111

Denis Martin  
Ovens Landcare Network  
Phone 03 5728 2191

Website: [www.nre.vic.gov.au](http://www.nre.vic.gov.au)

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