

Questions & Answers on licence DIR 156 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) buffalo grass

What does this licence allow?

The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University has received approval from the Gene Technology Regulator to grow GM buffalo grass plants in a field trial. The field trial is permitted to take place between April 2018 and April 2019 in Victoria on a maximum area of 200 m².

How have the GM buffalo grass plants been modified?

The GM buffalo grass plants contain two introduced genes derived from the plants thale cress and spinach. The genetic modifications confer tolerance to the herbicide glyphosate and reduce the growth rate and size of the plants. Tolerance to glyphosate helps weed management, as glyphosate can be applied to a lawn of the GM buffalo grass to kill weeds without harming the lawn. A dwarf variety of buffalo grass would require less water and less frequent mowing which makes lawn maintenance easier.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The purpose of the field trial is to assess the agronomic characteristics of the GM buffalo grass plants under field conditions. People do not generally eat buffalo grass and the GM buffalo grass grown in this field trial would not be used as animal feed.

What controls are imposed on this release?

A range of licence conditions have been imposed to limit the size, location and duration of the release, and to require training for all people who work with the GM buffalo grass. Control measures include conditions to minimise dispersal of the GMOs and GM pollen from the trial site, to securely transport and store the GMOs, and to inspect the trial site after completion of the trial to ensure all GM plants are destroyed. A full list of the control measures is detailed in the licence.

Want more information?

A number of documents relating to this decision are available on the [DIR 156 page](#) of the OGTR website or via Freecall 1800 181 030. These documents include the finalised Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP), a summary of the RARMP and the licence.

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