

Forage Focus



Spring sowing your pasture

Farming Systems

Spring Sowing

- Fast establishment
- Lower risk of pugging
- Warmer soil temperatures
- Better control of winter germinating weeds
- Better establishment of perennial clovers

For further information visit pggwrightsonseeds.com.au or call us on 1800 619 910

Spring sowing of a perennial pasture is a great alternative where rainfall is high and / or irrigation is available. The benefits include better weed control while having more favourable conditions for establishing a new pasture.

Background

A full pasture renovation is an investment that needs careful planning with the intention to have a productive pasture for a number of years. This can be challenging when sticking to a traditional autumn sowing in some regions of Australia, and it can fail if the winter is cold and wet and the paddocks cannot handle stock or machinery without causing damage.

Spring sowing of perennial pastures is gaining momentum and support across the country and is delivering increased success for farmers. This success is attributed to minimizing the risk of failure in areas where traditional autumn sowing does not produce the results that farmers are looking for (be it re-sowing or over-sowing).

Over-Sowing pugged pastures

Regions that experience wet winters create situations where many dairy pastures are pugged by cows. This can result in pasture production losses of up to 25%.

Pugged pastures can also encourage weeds to invade pastures, particularly difficult to control weeds such as dock. Good early management of this problem can quickly restore paddocks back to production for late spring and summer sowings to ensure the best response to autumn rains.

To assist you manage your pugged pastures PGG Wrightson Seeds have developed an easy to follow pasture evaluation checklist to assist you take the best pasture remedial action for your operation:

<10%	Damage	Heavy roller or smudger bar
10 - 20%	Damage	Over-sow with diploid perennial blend at 15kg/ha
20 - 35%	Damage	Over-sow with diploid medium term blend at 20kg/ha
35 - 50%	Damage	Over-sow with diploid short term blend at 25kg/ha
>50%	Damage	New pastures: Over-sow with diploid perennial blend at 25kg/ha Old pastures: Spray out and sow either turnips or a high quality forage rape as a brassica crop.

Forage Focus

Diploid grasses for over-sowing

Diploids have a very important role when considering over-sowing. For spring sowing, diploids do have some advantages as they generally have better tiller density with the short growing season before summer.

Increased tiller density helps improve summer quality, especially as PGG Wrightson Seeds plant breeders have focussed on reduced aftermath heading. This means that grasses like Maverick GII, Extreme® with AR1 endophyte and Extreme® with AR37 endophyte will have less seed head production following the initial heading period than many other diploids as they have been selected to stay vegetative after heading.

Steps for Successful Over-sowing

The steps needed to ensure successful spring establishment of pastures are:

- 01.** Soil test to identify any nutrient deficiencies that may affect pasture establishment and production
- 02.** Assess level of damage and determine best pasture mix and strategy for the situation
- 03.** Graze existing pasture hard to reduce trash for drilling and to set back existing plants
- 04.** If heavy pugging has occurred, consider using heavy harrows or railway iron to level out the paddock for more accurate sowing depth
- 05.** Over-sow pasture mix with a starter fertiliser (NP) blend, roll under ideal conditions or if drilling has left a rough result
- 06.** If conditions are dry, consider drilling deeper into moisture but do not cover as this will bury seed
- 07.** Use Ultrastrike® treated grasses and Superstrike® treated legumes for protection against key pasture pests such as Red Legged Earth Mite
- 08.** Graze new pastures as soon as plants can withstand pulling as this will restrict growth of existing pasture and allow new seedlings to establish

Steps for Successful Re-sowing

The steps needed to ensure successful spring establishment of pastures are:

- 01.** Soil test to identify any nutrient deficiencies that may affect pasture establishment and production
- 02.** Spray out old pasture with glyphosate to control all existing weeds
- 03.** Tank mix with Le-mat if Red Legged Earth Mite or lucerne flea are present
- 04.** Graze off excess residual pasture seven days after spraying to reduce decaying trash from the paddock
- 05.** If cultivating for a seedbed, ensure that it is worked quickly to maintain adequate moisture for sowing
- 06.** If moisture is a concern consider direct drilling with suitable machinery
- 07.** Shallow sow pasture and roll, if conditions are dry, consider drilling deeper into moisture but do not cover as this will bury seed
- 08.** Use Ultrastrike® treated grasses and Superstrike® treated legumes for protection against key pasture pests such as Red Legged Earth Mite
- 09.** Sow seed with fertiliser. Use Superphosphate in prepared seedbeds, and starter fertiliser (NP) blends if direct drilling
- 10.** Graze new pastures early, as soon as plants can withstand pulling

Forage Focus

Importance of Clover

In recent years a number of advisors have recommended sowing grass only pastures and using bagged nitrogen to drive pasture production. Whilst this strategy is clearly important in winter when clover growth and nitrogen fixation levels are low, clover still plays an important role in a pasture and in an animal's diet.

In dairy pastures with clover content around 30%, nitrogen fixation can be as high as 200kg N per hectare per year, and for pastures with 15% clover about half that. So if clover is able to be managed within the sward it can contribute savings of \$100-200 per hectare in nitrogen costs. Clover also produces higher levels of certain nutrients important for lactation so it is a valuable part of any pasture.

However, one of the challenges that farmers have to deal with is managing clover from an autumn sowing. This is because clover growth in winter is slow compared to ryegrass and clover seedlings tend to get shaded out. Spring sowing of a pasture with clover generally has a greater success due to the clover establishing in warmer conditions, which are better suited to its growth. White and red clover established in spring will have stronger root systems to go through the next winter as an established plant rather than a seedling.

Lets Grow Together

Planning your forage and seed requirements in advance can make a big difference to your productivity. For over 75 years PGG Wrightson Seeds have been working with farmers to get the balance right.

To discuss your growth plans call your Pasture Specialist now on 1800 619 910.