

Technical Update - Grass Reseeding

Information correct as at 09:00am on 22.07.2022

- Forage productivity is crucial under current market conditions
- New leys will give much better responses to expensive fertiliser
- Payback can be seen in as little as 1 year
- Look at options for legumes to reduce reliance on artificial N
- Identify poorest performing grass leys on the farm
- Identify reasons for potential poor sward performance and correct before reseeding
- Use varieties from the NIAB list (or regional equivalent)

Why Reseed?

There have always been good reasons to adopt a regular reseeding policy, but with increased fertiliser costs the extra potential of new leys is even more significant. The current drought may have also impacted sward productivity going forward and it may be necessary to replace or rejuvenate leys.

Upgrading a sward gives the following advantages and opportunities:

- Improves pasture yield and quality
- Allows the introduction of modern grass genetics with improved productivity, quality, durability and disease resistance
- Increases pasture response to fertiliser by using more nitrogen-efficient varieties
- Reduces weed burden
- Can help to address any soil compaction problems
- Gives an opportunity to introduce clover into the sward

Causes of Sward Deterioration:

Before embarking on the investment of a reseed it is always worth identifying why the current sward is not performing. If these underlying problems are not rectified the benefits will be reduced

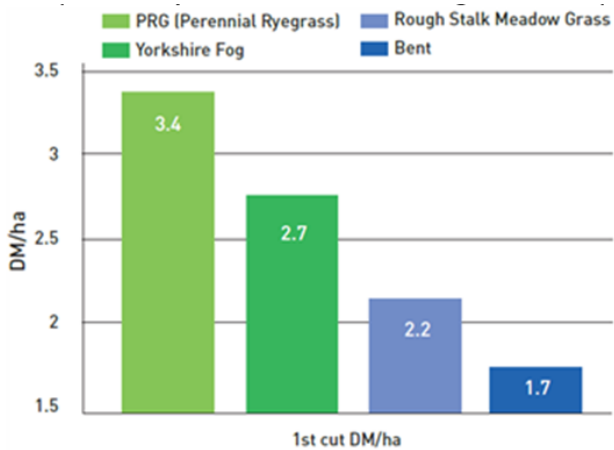
- Poor drainage and soil structure
- Incorrect soil pH and low nutrient status
- Poor management by understocking and overstocking allowing non sown species to flourish at the expense of the desired mixture

Reseeding – is it worth it?

- A full reseed will cost £155 - £170/acre (£30 - £35 per year over 5 years)
- You will see a 30% boost in yield year 1 then 10% per year after that (compared to a 5-year- old ley)
- For example, 5.2t DM/acre compared to 4t DM/acre
- If grass silage costs £160/t DM then reseeding cost recouped in one year from extra yield alone

Yield of PRG vs Weed grasses:

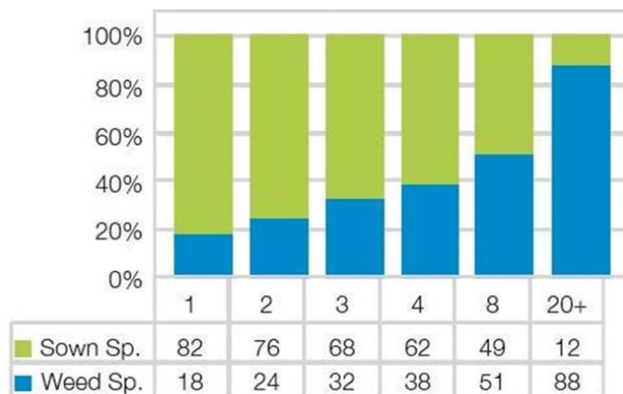
The table below shows the higher fertiliser response rates for Ryegrass compared to some weed grasses.



Source: Grassland Research Institute

Weed Ingression

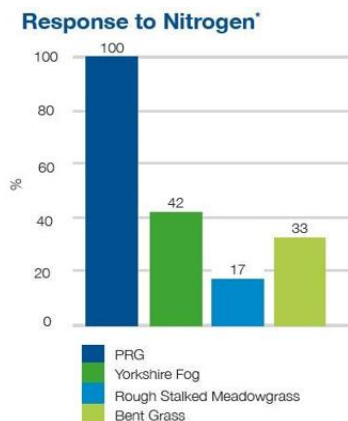
- Even in well managed swards proportion of sown species deteriorates over time
- After 5 years could make up 40% of the sward



Source: Grassland Research Institute

Ryegrass vs. weed grasses

- Ryegrasses show significantly higher response to increased N applications



*These losses in response occur when N is increased from 50-150 units/ac

Source: Grassland Research Institute

Pre-seeding checklist:

Test soil for nutrient status and pH. Lime is the cheapest input available to help with grassland management, but is often overlooked. Target pH should be 6.5 as below 6 nutrient uptake is seriously reduced. As well as increasing the productivity of the new ley, lime will help reduce the effect of acidity as the old sward decomposes. Add N, P & K to the seedbed depending on soil indices

Finally check for compaction by digging a hole to see if there is an issue and how deep the problem lies. Shallow compaction can be taken out with the cultivations, deeper problems may need a sub-soiler.

Current swards can be improved by oversowing and it is possible to reduce the cost of a reseed by direct drilling. However, now that we have no chemicals for controlling grassland pests these techniques come with a higher risk of crop failure.

Which Grass Seed?

- Always use varieties on the NIAB list which have been proven for their yield, quality and disease resistance characteristics
- Choose a mixture that is suitable for the farm's specific conditions and the required end use
- Perennial ryegrasses will provide a quality product throughout the season, giving greater yields of energy and protein
- Consider using clover in mixes to reduce N requirements and add protein to forages
- If grassland weeds are under control, then consider introducing clover into existing swards
- All Advance grass seed mixes have been specially selected for a specific role and from 2022 all have the option of clover inclusion, with the varieties chosen for their compatibility with the rest of the sward.

Attention to detail:

Reseeding is expensive so it is worth doing well to get the best results.

- Tackle weeds in the old sward with glyphosate applied at the correct growth stage for a clean start.
- Ensure a fine, firm seedbed to promote good seed to soil contact.
- Control weeds at an early stage
- If there is a big population of leather jackets, frit fly or wireworms consider using a break crop to disrupt the life cycle of the pests before re-establishing grass

For further discussion or to help with any questions that you may have, please contact Consultant Support on consultantsupport@kiteconsulting.com or 01902 851007 / 07542 403225

