Establishing forage hybrids using the direct drilling method

Is the paddock suffering from winter pugging and or perennial pasture weeds, e.g. couch?
Yes
Spray with a Glyphosate type product, e.g. Roundup Renew, leave for the recommended days and lightly cultivate to help break up the soil compaction.

No
Spray with a Glyphosate type product with an insecticide, e.g. Chlorpyrifos EC, leave for a minimum of 4-7 days and check for slugs treat if required.

Is the ground temperature above the recommended 14° to 15° typically late October early November?
No
It’s very important to delay sowing until the ground temperature is at the recommended temperature. Sowing too early will lead to poor establishment.

Yes
Drill at 25kgs/hectare dryland or drill at 30kgs/hectare in high summer rainfall or irrigated areas. Sow to a minimum of 4cm, drill with 150 to 200kgs DAP/hectare

Establishing forage hybrids using traditional cultivation methods

Are perennial weeds present in the paddock, e.g. couch?
Yes
Spray the paddock with a Glyphosate type product e.g. Roundup Renew at the recommended label rate of application, leave for 5 days then start cultivation.

No
Commence surface working followed by ploughing and cultivation to achieve a firm fine seed bed.

Is the ground temperature above the recommended 14° to 15° typically late October early November?
No
It’s very important to delay sowing until the ground temperatures is at the recommended temperature. Sowing too early will lead to poor establishment.

Yes
Drill at 25kgs/hectare dryland or drill at 30kgs/hectare in high summer rainfall or irrigated areas. Sow to a minimum of 4cm, drill with 150 to 200kgs DAP/hectare

It is important to always read the label on any chemical used, to follow the instructions and take note of and comply with the information on the label.
Sorghum or forage hybrid?

Sorghum is a term incorrectly used to cover summer forage crops more correctly called forage hybrids. Within the two cultivars marketed in New Zealand there are major differences. For example, the sorghum commonly known as sorghum is in fact a Sudan x Sudan grass forage hybrid, while SF BMR Revolution is a Sudan grass x sorghum hybrid cross. Other hybrid crosses available include sorghum x sweet sorghum hybrids and sweet sorghum x sweet sorghum hybrids.

Where would you use a forage hybrid?

Forage hybrids are typically drilled in the late spring and harvested over summer until early autumn, the same way we grow traditional crops like summer turnips, summer rapes and summer brassica hybrids e.g. Pasja. New Zealand farmers have been using summer forage hybrids for several years mainly in the mid to upper North Island. Cooler summer climatic conditions.

Forage hybrids that we sell

Currently there are two cultivars of forage hybrids being sold on the market in New Zealand; Sprint and SF BMR Revolution.

Sprint

Sprint is a Sudan x Sudan hybrid and can produce excellent quality feed during hot summers and has been selected for regions where shorter, hotter summers exist. Sprint is the first of a range of forage hybrids being developed by Pacific Seeds Ltd to specifically meet the demands of New Zealand’s climatic conditions.

SF BMR Revolution

SF BMR Revolution is a Sudan x Sorghum hybrid and is a versatile option for farms requiring high value/high production summer forage. SF BMR Revolution suits early planting, is extremely vigorous, palatable, fine stemmed and very leafy. Over the next year or two there will be more cultivars coming onto the New Zealand market. Keep an eye on our website for the latest on product information (www.specseed.co.nz).

Forage hybrids vs. summer forage brassicas

While recognising the important role summer forage brassicas play, some of their problems include; poor dry matter yields during dry summers, only being able to be harvested by stock, weed and pest control issues.

Forage hybrids yield well during dry seasons. Overseas trials show little dry matter yield difference between irrigated and un-irrigated crops. This provides a significant advantage over summer forage brassicas that are high maintenance during dry seasons, requiring a high level of weed and pest control. As they are a rapidly growing crop, forage hybrids rarely need weed control and don’t require pest control thus making the cost of production lower. Should they require weed control then there is a wide range of cost-effective chemicals available for use.

Forage hybrids are more flexible than summer forage brassicas as they can be harvested either by eating or made into balage/silage. Summer forage brassicas, even in years of plenty, need to be eaten by stock. Forage hybrids are best harvested for balage or silage in a multi cut system.

We understand that no two farming operations are the same

That’s why we specialise in offering expert advice about the right product for your farm. Talk to us about our extensive range of seeds and find the right match of seed to soil, for ultimate results on your farm.

Table 1. Australian guide to protein and energy from an average grazed forage hybrid crop

Table 2. Australian guide to protein and energy from an average grazed forage hybrid crop

Table 2. Forage hybrid yields

Table 1. is a guide to protein and energy from an average forage hybrid crop (Jumbo) grazed by late maturing bulls. The figures in black are when the crop was grazed at the recommended 0.8m high (based on NDF of 52%) the figures in red are when it was grazed at the less than ideal height of 1.5m high (based on NDF of 58%). It should also be noted that forage hybrid should be used as part of a balanced diet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cut 1</th>
<th>Cut 2</th>
<th>Cut 3</th>
<th>Total DM yield (t/ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sprint</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Crops grown under poor conditions may have a lower feed quality, which will lead to lower liveweight gains.