

Winter management of established Lucerne stands

During the summer's dry period we really saw how valuable a well managed Lucerne stand can be on dry land and irrigated farms. Winter is a very important time of year for a Lucerne stand and good management during the winter will set your stand up for the rest of the year.

The following management tips are designed for paddocks more than 1 year old.

There are three main objectives for winter management of Lucerne they are, grazing management, weed control and fertiliser.

Grazing management.

Once frosts have stopped growth in the early to mid winter hard graze the stand with a large mob. This helps with the control of over-wintering aphids as well as sets the stand up for better weed control that follows soon after. As any management that removes the growing point will reduce your yield potential in the spring the earlier you can start this first step of the "clean up" process the better.



Weed control.

Inspection of your stand during the autumn will identify the need for weed control. It is normal for established Lucerne stands to need a chemical clean up every year. Weed control should be done soon after the final grazing (between 4-10 days) before the stand starts growing again to minimise crop damage. The use of the following chemicals contain both knock down contact and residual herbicides and should be used before mid to end of July.

Commonly used chemical recommendation on established Lucerne stands during winter.

2-3 litres PQ 200
+
850 grams Atragranz 90 WG
Per hectare in 200 litres of water.

Note: For more information on PQ200 and Atragranz please follow the links below. Always read and follow label instructions before using any chemical.

<http://www.orioncp.co.nz/pdfs/labels/PQ200%20June%202008.pdf>

<http://www.orioncp.co.nz/pdfs/labels/ATRAGRANZ.pdf>

Fertiliser.

People often underestimate the large amount of nutrients that are removed from your Lucerne stand each season. Fertiliser removal will be greater in paddocks used for hay and silage than on a stand used for grazing, however as with all high producing crops regular monitoring with soil and plant tissue tests is recommended. While the use of trace elements may not need to be applied each year the base nutrients, potassium and lime in particular, will most likely need to be.

The amount and content of the fertiliser used should be made in consultation with your preferred fertiliser representative.



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