

# Managing new pasture

## Establishing New Pastures

Grow & Utilise

Pasture establishment takes 12 months. Good management during this time gets new plants off to a strong start and helps them persist. A pasture is not successfully established until you have a dense, well tillered sward one year after sowing.

## Do's and don'ts

| | DO | DON'T |
|---|---|---|
| 0-4 weeks post-sowing | ■ Monitor closely for insect damage and/ or weed germination and treat accordingly. | ■ Drive by without getting our fo the vechicle and quickly inspecting the paddock.<br>■ Graze, or where irrigated overwater. |
| At 4-6 weeks | ■ Graze lightly when pasture seedlings cannot be 'plucked out' by hand. Aim to remove the top 2-3 cm using young stock.<br>■ Apply nitrogen to encourage plant tillering (20-25 kg N/ ha). | ■ Pug or tread new pastures – aim to graze when soil conditions are good.<br>■ Delay first grazing. This is bad for tillering and clover; slows establishment, and can reduce yields by +1 t DM/ha more. |
| 2nd grazing onwards | ■ Maintain consistent residuals - new pasture grows fast and needs frequent grazing. Light grazing also helps your clover.<br>■ Monitor weeds. | ■ Let pastures get too long.<br>■ Make heavy hay or silage crops; this stresses young pasture |
| First year | ■ Be gentle on new pasture, it is still young.<br>■ In extended dry periods, graze lightly, leaving at least 2-3cm residual (sheep), or 4-5cm (cows). | ■ Overgraze.<br>■ Restock new pasture too early after dry spells - let it recover and build its reserves. |

## First grazing

The most critical grazing is the first ‘nip-off’ and should occur as soon as the baby grass plants do not pull out of the ground. Light grazing promotes grass tillering and growth. Early grazing also benefits slower establishing species, like clover and herbs, allowing light to reach them. Young clover plants are usually smaller, and susceptible to shading. If your seed is treated, check the grazing withhold period. For *Agricote Grass*, this is 42 days for sowing, and 21 days for undersowing.

## Space invaders

Monitor new pastures closely for emerging weeds. They compete aggressively with young grass, clovers and herbs, reducing pasture longevity. Spray early when they are still small and easier to control (typically before or after first grazing). If you do need to spray, make sure the herbicide is safe for other sown species.

## Subequent grazings

From the second grazing onwards, new pastures grow fast and need frequent grazing. Apply small amounts of nitrogen to boost growth and tillering. Keep pastures relatively short to encourage ryegrass to tiller and prevent shading of clover and herbs. Don’t let them get too long (>3500 kg DM/ha), or take a heavy silage cut in year one.

## First winter & summer

Graze new pastures carefully in periods of stress. In wet winters, protect them from treading damage. Otherwise, future DM yield and persistence will be compromised. In dry periods, do not overgraze establishing pasture.