WINTER CEREALS

Another tool in the agronomy and feedbase tool box

Murray DAIRY | Dairy Australia
Accelerating Change

Advantages include:

- Quick to graze
- More tolerant of dry conditions than ryegrass
- Plenty of weed control options
- More tolerant to poor seedbed than ryegrass
- Enables strategic use of irrigation water
- Can benefit soil structure

WHAT ARE THE KEY MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS TO BRING CEREALS TO SUCCESS?

JANUARY

Choose a species and variety based on your end purpose

Graze/ensile/bale/grain?
Oats/barley/wheat/other?

Targeted feedgap & end use: This will guide species and characteristics of variety: e.g. early, mid or late maturing.

Weed burden: Wheat has the greatest range of options for in crop weed control. Oats have the least.

Rotations: Weed & disease burden & nutrient requirements are affected by rotations.

Check with your agronomist for advice

FEBRUARY

Understand your costs up front:
Do a gross margin

Understand your weed burden and plan your pre-emergent options:
Avoid Group B's on irrigation.

Check your soil fertility:
Do soil testing

Identify any sub soil constraints
Plan your nutrient requirements accordingly.

MARCH

For irrigated ground
Time of sowing:
Based on varietal selection, end purpose and climate conditions.
Ideally sow into moisture

Determine sowing rates:
Base it on the plant population you want, seed size and expected establishment

Plan your nutrient applications:
A cereal hay crops needs about 20kg N per tonne of hay produced

APRIL

First grazing:
The earliest graze should be when a cereal plant will not pluck out of the soil (has enough root development to withstand cows pulling on it)
This usually occurs around 20-25cm in height.
Crops need a residual amount left over to recover from grazing of 5-10cm.

Assess nutrient requirements:
Do you need to top dress after first grazing? Time with rain or irrigation.

Monitor weeds and pets:
Crops generally more susceptible to insect attack during this period. Strong healthy crops tend to beat the bugs the best. If you have low soil fertility you might be more susceptible. Look our for RLEM, flea, cutworm, wirewom.

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MAY JUNE

Stay on top of weed control
Options will relate back to varietal and species selection. Be mindful of plant backs and grazing withholding periods.

Graze again

Monitor nutrient requirements
Rampant tillerng and dark green colour: lots of N available
Low tillering and pale green/yellow colour: N may be deficient
Tissue test to confirm

JULY AUGUST

Final graze
Typically final graze now to mid August depending on where node is at (see below)
Do not graze after stem elongation-can reduce silage yields by up to 50%.
Cut open plant stem to identify where developing ear is at.

Revisit nutrient requirements

SEPTEMBER

Monitor seasonal conditions & consider irrigation
For best return on water applied irrigate prior to any stress in cereal
check gross margin-how much can you afford vs what is the likely yield benefit?

Consider fungicide requirement now for whole crop silage or hay:
Check witholding periods.

HARVEST

Plan harvest schedule based on end purpose and crop development stage

Whole crop cereal silage
Choose either Flag leaf-boot stage (lower yield, higher ME & CP)
OR
Late milk-soft dough stage (higher yield, variable ME, lower CP)

Cut at target dry matter and don't guess-measure.

For more technical information on Winter Cropping, visit the Accelerating Change website:

www.acceleratingchangeproject.com