



## DELIVERING FAST FEED BY OVER-SOWING PERENNIAL RYEGRASS PASTURES

Over-sowing is the practice of drilling in new pasture seed over the top of an existing pasture stand to improve the performance of existing pasture. This is an effective alternative to full pasture renovation when fast, high-quality home-grown feed is required with minimal cost.

**PASTURE PARTNERS**  
MAXIMISING HOME-GROWN FEED

### WHY OVER-SOWING SHOULD BE CONSIDERED TO FULL Paddock RENOVATION

	OVER-SOWING	FULL Paddock RENOVATION
BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reduced cost.</li> <li>✓ Lengthen the useful life of a pasture.</li> <li>✓ Improved turn-around time from sowing to grazing.</li> <li>✓ Reduced winter pugging risk.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Remove problem grass weeds via chemical or mechanical fallow.</li> <li>✓ Cultivate and smooth out pug holes for better trafficability.</li> <li>✓ More uniform stand of pasture.</li> <li>✓ Better for establishing some co-species .</li> </ul>
POTENTIAL NEGATIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Reduced grass weed control.</li> <li>✗ Reduced paddock pest and disease break</li> <li>✗ Won't fix pug holes or paddock bumps.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Higher cost than over-sowing (chemical and cultivation expense).</li> <li>✗ Longer time until first grazing.</li> <li>✗ Higher risk of winter pugging.</li> </ul>

## FAST FAVOURABLE RETURNS BY OVER-SOWING RUN-DOWN PASTURE

Returns on investment (ROI) is generally favourable for over-sowing thus it can be a good way to boost the productivity of your pasture base. This is especially important when fodder prices are high, and the productive potential of your pasture base is good.

Current level of pasture production (% of potential)	Potential growth at full production (MT dry matter/ha)	Forgone pasture production (MT/ha)	Cost of over-sowing (\$/ha)	Extra pasture grown from over-sowing (MT/ha over 12 months)*	Value of extra pasture grown (\$/ha if valued at \$200/MT DM)	ROI (Gross \$\$ per dollar invested).
30%	12	8.40	260	6.72	1,344	5
50%	12	6.0	260	4.80	960	4
70%	12	3.60	260	2.88	576	2

**Assumptions:** Production potential is for a well fertilised perennial ryegrass pasture in a high rainfall/irrigated dairy area of southern Australia. Cost of over-sowing includes contract sowing rate of \$90/ha, \$80/ha of starter fertiliser, and 15 kg Seed @ \$6/kg. These are estimates only. Use your own costs to estimate your likely return on investment. \*Assuming you can recover 80% of the forgone potential with over-sowing.

## HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY OVER-SOW TO MAXIMISE HOME-GROWN FEED

### 1 Check paddock fertility

Review the current ryegrass cover in your paddock, as well as the weed burden. If the pasture is relatively grass weed free and has a cover between 30–70% viable ryegrasses, then the paddock is suitable for over-sowing to maximise home-grown feed.

If the paddock has less than 30% ryegrass cover or has a high degree of grass weeds, we recommend a full paddock renovation. Over 70% cover, no re-seeding action is required.

% Ryegrass cover in paddock	Re-sowing recommendation	Other considerations
<30%	Undertake a full paddock renovation.	
30–50%	Oversow using an annual ryegrass.	If there is either a high grass weed burden, or the paddock needs flattening, you are better off with full renovation.
50–70%	Oversow using an Italian, hybrid or even perennial ryegrass.	
>70%	Generally, no action required.	

### 2 Variety selection

Ideally, sow in a variety that will match the maturity of the existing perennial ryegrass pasture. This is so that you can optimise the quality and timing of both grazing and silage cutting later in the season. For existing stands of late-maturity perennial ryegrass (such as Bealey or Impact 2), good oversowing options are:

- ✓ HOGAN annual ryegrass for stands 30–50% cover.
- ✓ TEMPO or ASTON Italian ryegrass OR SHOGUN hybrid ryegrass for stands with between 50–70% cover. To perfectly match the existing pasture base, you may want to top-up with perennial ryegrass.

### 3 Sowing for success

- ✓ Graze the paddock down to remove some of the residual pasture and consider a knockdown herbicide like paraquat.
- ✓ Ensure your machine doesn't sow too deep. Aim for 5–20 mm for ryegrass.
- ✓ Timing is critical – sow as soon as possible after the break, or if your highly confident of impending rainfall dry sowing may be an option too.
- ✓ Apply adequate starter fertiliser and ensure fertility is corrected prior to sowing.

### 4 Grazing

Don't graze too early, wait until the new plants are well anchored. Time will be dependent on growing conditions, anywhere from 6–10 weeks. Do a 'pull test', by using your hand to pull on new seedlings at cow grazing height. If the plants pull out of the ground roots at all, it is too early to graze. If they hold, then the pasture is ready for grazing.

## WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Our team of experienced Territory Managers are ready to provide you with specialist advice.

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