

# PASTURE ESTABLISHMENT

## *Pre-sowing preparation*



- Soil testing should be carried out with enough time to correct any fertility deficiencies (6-12 months). See Pastures and Fertilisers section.
- Weed and pest control should begin with careful identification of species, growth stage and vigour. This will determine herbicide and pesticide selection. Seek advice from a technical representative for specific recommendations.
- Hard grazing in the months prior to sowing will minimize volunteer summer-growing weeds from reseeding. Spray following, in combination with pre-sowing cultivation will aid in removing trash and promoting weed germination for better control of existing weed-banks.
- Early workings should aim to stimulate weed germination (ideally 2 months pre-sowing).
- Aim for a moist, fine, firm seedbed. Rolling will firm a 'fluffy' seedbed. A well prepared seedbed will assist in accurate placement of seed and fertiliser.
- Conventional cultivation is generally the most reliable way of eliminating weeds and establishing new pastures.
- Direct drilling, when combined with successful spray control of weeds and adequate fertiliser applications, can be a more flexible, more precise and more successful method of establishment than sowing into cultivated situations.

## *Planting*

Sow at the right time for the species. Moisture to a depth of 20cm is ideal. As a general guideline winter growing annuals need to be sown by mid-winter, perennial species can be sown in either autumn or spring. Dry sowing can be risky if initial rainfall events are not followed by further rains. Autumn sowing is usually more reliable than spring sowing. Spring sowing (early Aug-mid Sep) can be successful as long as seedling development has occurred prior to the onset of hot, dry conditions.

- Accurate seed placement is vital for successful establishment. Depending upon species, an average depth of 2.5cm is ideal, with 5% of seed and fertiliser being visible in drill row. Often establishment failure can be attributed to the burying too deeply of small perennial seeds.
- Seed quality should be checked at time of purchase with the sighting of a Purity and Germination certificate. Insist on certified seed.
- Use the correct sowing rate recommended for each species. Reduced sowing rates may allow weed invasion.
- Fertiliser application at sowing is essential for the development of healthy seedlings.
- Use of chemical treated seed for pest/disease protection, and rhizobia- inoculated legume seed is recommended.



### *Post emergence checks*

- Monitor the paddock regularly, looking for weed germination and any obvious pest/disease damage. Take action or seek advice quickly.
- Once grasses can pass the 'pull test' (when seedlings cannot be pulled from ground) a quick, light graze will be beneficial for promoting tillering both above ground and in their roots.
- Overgrazing a pasture in its first year, especially when it is under moisture stress, will severely limit its persistence.

*Refer to individual species for specific sowing information.*