

Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 17th July 2020

USING WHITE CLOVER IN PASTURE

The inclusion of white clover in reseeding programmes is a requirement under the new derogation rules. From 2020, a minimum of 1.5 kg/ha naked clover seed i.e. un-pelleted clover seed, is required for all new grass reseeds. Either white (grazing) or red (cutting) or mixture of clovers can be used. Over sowing of grass seed mixtures with clover post weed control will be permitted.

Why Use White Clover?

White Clover will increase grass production and quality. It improves animal performance - 13% increase in animal carcass weight & 25% increase in lamb live weight gain. It saves €50/acre on Nitrogen fertiliser (save 110 units N/acre, CAN @ €250/t) and gives a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions

Where to sow white clover?

- High fertility soils (soil pH>6.3, >Index 3 for P and K)
- In fields where with high ryegrass content and where weeds are well controlled
- Drier fields on farm; don't sow on gley or peat soils

How to sow white clover?

- Sow between late April to mid-July and choose varieties from recommended list [here](#)
- Sow small/medium leaf clover for sheep as their grazing pattern can remove the medium leaf clovers
- Sow medium leaf clover for cattle
- Choose fields with a high perennial ryegrass content
- Always roll after sowing to ensure good seed contact with the soil
- Do not bury the seed

Clover can be included in the grass seed mix

- Ensure you have a fine, firm seed bed
- Don't sow too deep, 10 -12mm
- Sowing rate of 1 to 2 kg/ac
- Ensure good contact with soil by rolling

Broadcast

- Just after cutting or grazing paddock tightly, <4cm
- Best time is to over-sow in spring or early summer to ensure adequate soil moisture for clover establishment
- Mix 2 kg of clover with 1 bag of 0-7-30 or 0-10-20 per acre in the field, the clover seed is so small if you travel any distance with it in the fertiliser spreader or slug pellet applicator it will separate out
- Reduce chemical fertiliser to give the clover time to establish and not be over shadowed by grass
- Spread in two opposite directions, across the field then up and down to get an even spread of seed – avoid windy days when broadcasting

- Ensure to roll to get good seed contact with the soil
- Graze as soon as grass gets to 7-9cm (1,200-1,400 Kg DM/ha) to keep light down to the little plants, keep grazing regularly.

Stitch in

- Seeding rate of 2 kg of clover seed
- Follow the same management as above
- Don't bury the seed too deep, 10-12mm at most and remember to roll.

How to manage white clover?

- You need to understand the growth pattern of clover to be able to manage it effectively. The diagram below shows the interaction between grass and clover growth.
- Grass starts to grow at soil temperatures of 5°C while clover needs soil temperatures closer to 9°C, therefore grass dominates in spring and needs to be fertilised.
- When soil temperatures increase, the clover starts to grow and its nodules begin to release fixed nitrogen therefore there is less of a requirement for nitrogen, so it can be fertiliser application can reduced or stopped from May onwards.
- Graze paddocks at 7-9 cm (1,200-1,400 Kg DM/ha) and graze down tight to 4 cm. Clover grows and spreads using stolons that stay on top of the ground, it is essential light gets to these stolons to promote growth so grazing needs to be tight and often. The stolon mass determines the clover content of swards.
- Avoid over grazing and winter damage.
- Avoid heavy silage cuts.
- Be careful when spraying only use clover-safe herbicides.

Beware of bloat

- Keep post-grazing sward height to 4 cm
- Avoid switching from grass-only swards to mixed grass/clover swards
- Avoid letting in excessively hungry animals
- Check stock regularly during the first 3 hours after entering a paddock
- Can be prevalent after high rainfall and if clover content >50%

Notes

- Clover persists for 3-8 years (depending on management and soil fertility). Recommended to over sow every 5 years.
- Wilt for 1-2 days if making silage.
- Clover grows at 9°C, whereas grass grows at 5°C soil temperature, match fertiliser applications to growth pattern.

Health & Safety

Work at Heights is Dangerous

The risk of a fatality increases by 11 fold when working at a height. Twenty-five people died due to a fall from a height on farms in the 10-year period 2010-2019. Fifteen deaths arose from a roof fall, with six due to falling through a skylight. Careful planning is needed before accessing a height. Controls include having a secure means of access and that the work area is both sound and nonslip with edge protection. Skylights and fragile roofs, in particular, need to be identified and fall prevention measures such as crawler boards used. Further information is in the Farm Safety Risk Assessment document. Teagasc, the HSA and FBD Insurance have produced a new edition of Build in Safety, an advisory booklet for farmers, available at www.teagasc.ie.