

Lucerne

Lucerne

Four Year Cutting Crop

Sow with a small seeds drill or broadcast 8 kg per acre (20 kg/ha).

£5.80 per kg

Grass Option

Ref. MIXLUC

We recommend the use of a non-competitive grass mixture to be sown with lucerne. The grass assists the silage fermentation process, contributes to yield and fills the base of the crop, therefore providing competition against weeds. Sow grass and lucerne seed at 10 mm.

3.00 kg certified **ROSSA** or similar meadow fescue

1.00 kg certified **PROMESSE** timothy

4.00 kg per acre £11.89 (10 kg/ha £29.73)

Culture

The use of culture to provide the correct type of bacteria to initiate nodulation is considered essential. This relatively simple process is done on the day of sowing. We supply small sachets of culture which you mix with seed. One size is available which treats 25 kgs of lucerne seed.

£8.00 per sachet plus VAT

Use

Lucerne is a long term, drought resistant and high yielding legume which is grown mainly for silage. Typically it will produce 3 or more cuts per year. It has a high protein content of around 18-22% and is a good source of vitamins and minerals. The majority of lucerne is grown pure or with a small inclusion of non-aggressive grass as it has little tolerance of competitive ryegrass.

Although lucerne is usually ensiled it can also be made into hay. It should be handled carefully during the hay drying process as it is very delicate. It is a popular forage for horses and can therefore be a useful cash crop. A further possibility is to feed lucerne green. The risk of bloat is very real and for this reason the best way to feed fresh is to cut and leave for 24 hours prior to feeding.

Yield

Dry matter yields are likely to be 14t/ha. It will require adequate phosphate and potash levels to achieve this and a pH of 6 is considered the minimum.

Variety

The selection of the correct variety is important. We recommend Vela as being the best for this year. This offers good resistance against Verticillium wilt, a disease which is soil borne and must be avoided if lucerne is to be grown regularly.

Field Choice

Only grow lucerne on free draining soils, it will perform badly on waterlogged ground. The range of suitable soil types is considerable from clay loam to a light chalk or limestone and it is on the latter that lucerne has been usually grown. Lucerne is very sensitive to poor drainage and compacted soil conditions that restrict root growth, nor will it tolerate acid soils.

Sowing & Establishment

It is advisable to sow either in the spring or summer. Late autumn sowing is risky as the seedlings being slow growing at first do not have time to develop before the onset of winter.

For spring sowings it is popular to undersow a spring cereal. Priority has to be given to the lucerne. Sow the cereal at half the recommended sowing rate. Ideally cut the cereal, usually spring barley, for silage at the milky stage.

When sowing in the summer it is usual to follow an early harvested cereal such as winter barley. The middle of August is the latest date for sowing provided a good seedbed can be made and there is sufficient moisture available.