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## Multi-Species Q&A

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### **Questions for Multi-species week**

- Can I ensile Multi-species?
  - Yes, Multi-species can make quality silage once the crop is cut in dry conditions and given a good wilt.
  - This is important as it has a about 3-5% lower DM than ryegrass. A wet crop will not preserve.
  - Multi-species might not be a specialist silage crop, but it is possible to cut surplus paddocks etc... as bales if needed.
- If ensiling, at what DM should the crop be?
  - Typically, a multi-species sward has a DM content 3-5% lower than ryegrass.
  - A target DM of 25-35% when cutting should mean successful preservation.
  - If you are unsure, a short wilt will do no harm.
- How long can I expect my Multi-species to persist?
  - Grasses and white clover can persist for 7 – 10 years if managed correctly but the likes of red clover and herbs have shorter persistence of 3-4 years.
  - These species can easily be oversown if their numbers drop significantly.
  - The savings on fertiliser alone with a multi-species sward will far outweigh the cost of oversowing twice in 10 years for example.
- What can I do if the herbs bolt?
  - It is unlikely that herbs will bolt in a rotational grazing system, but chicory might, and this can be fixed by topping.



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## Multi-Species Q&A (page 2)

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- Can I oversow herbs into a grass-clover sward?
    - Yes.
    - Our partner farmer Kevin O'Hanlon had great success oversowing clover and herbs this year.
    - Check out Day 2 of our Multispecies Focus Week. We also have a special series on oversowing plantain.
- [\(Link\)](#)
- How much less N will I use?
    - It is possible to reduce fertiliser use by 150-200kg N/ha per year without losing yield compared to ryegrass sward.
    - Some N is required in spring to feed the grasses which will be dominating the sward at this time.
    - Around 50 units of N can be spread throughout the spring – divide this up little and often applications.
  - Do Multi-species benefit pollinators?
    - Yes. Pollinators are known to love clover which flowers throughout summer and autumn in grassland.
  - Is plantain not a weed?
    - There is no such thing as a weed – just a plant growing in the wrong place.
    - It is not a weed in a mixed sward because it has number of benefits like high mineral content and drought tolerance.
    - The varieties sown in mixtures have been bred for grazing and are very palatable.



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## Multi-Species Q&A (page 3)

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- What pH do Multi-species prefer?
  - pH for any pasture should be between 6 and 6.5 for maximum production. They will grow outside this range, but this will affect production and nutrient-use efficiency of the sward. (This is for all swards not just multi-species).
- Is there a yield penalty in the spring? / Will I be down on spring grass?
  - On highly stocked farms, multi-species alone may not meet your grass demand as it will not have reached its maximum growth rates yet.
  - A good balanced grazing platform might have a mixture of MSS and Perennial Ryegrass paddocks with the PRG for use in the first part of the year and the MSS for the latter.
  - MSS should form part of a diverse/resilient grazing system with different forages utilised at different times for maximum effect e.g., grass-multispecies-kale for example.
- Can I sow plantain on its own?
  - Yes. Plantain can be sown on its own and is very popular in New Zealand as a short-term forage crop. It is especially good for finishing lambs.
  - Could be used as a specialist crop sown for grazing in summer and autumn for lambs.
  - Chicory is the same.



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## Multi-Species Q&A (page 4)

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- How do I manage my spray program if I have docks or chickweed present?
  - Any weeds should be sprayed off before MSS is sown as there are no safe herbicides for this type of sward.
  - Chickweed in the sward after establishment should not cause many problems and will die out after a couple of grazing's.
  - If establishment of the grass, legume and herbs is good there should be little chance for docks to establish. But any outbreaks can be spot-sprayed.
  - If the field is known to have a weed problem, it might be best to sow MSS in a different field.
- Do animals like Multi-species?
  - Yes, animals seem to really like eating MSS. Sometimes they look hesitant when they first go into the field but then it is hard to get them out!
- Does it taint the milk?
  - No.

**For more information on selecting the right mixture for your farm, call Thomas Moloney, DLF 087 396 1265**