Brome grasses (pasture brome, prairie grass, grazing brome)

Introduction

Brome grasses are perennial plant species suited to free draining soils of moderate to high fertility, particularly in lower rainfall areas. They do not persist well on poorly drained soils.

They are palatable, including their seed heads, and offer good quality feed and persistence. Bromes are slower than ryegrass to establish and should be sown in warm conditions (late summer/early autumn or spring), into a well consolidated seedbed.

Brome grasses are all quite different species (not just different varieties). They range from the erect prairie grass (*Bromus willdenowii*) which is suited to rotational grazing, and medium erect pasture brome (*Bromus valdivianus*), to finer leaved grazing brome (*Bromus stamineus*) which is most suited to set stocking.

Brome grasses do not contain endophyte.

Management tips

Sowing rate
Brome grasses should be sown at 25-30 kg/ha, plus clovers. A high sowing rate is required because of their large seed.

Care must be taken when sowing brome grasses because their large seed does not flow well in some drills. Modern drills with sponge feeders or air seeders do not generally experience problems, but older conventional drills may.

Sowing time
For good establishment bromes need warm conditions i.e. during late spring or late summer/early autumn when the soil temperature is above 12°C.

In dry areas it is often best to start preparation for sowing in late spring using a summer fallow period prior to sowing. Spray the area off in late spring to conserve moisture for pasture establishment.

Good seed bed
A fine, firm, weed-free seed bed is desirable when sowing any new pasture, but because bromes are slower establishing, this is even more important. Brome grasses should be sown shallow (at 10-20 mm depth), and the seed bed must be well consolidated.

Direct drilling can work well in some situations.