

# Tall fescue

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## Introduction

Tall fescue suits some situations but not others. It is a perennial grass more tolerant of hot summers and poorly drained soils than perennial ryegrass. It is sensitive to soil temperature so must be sown when soil temperatures are above 12°C. It is slower to establish than ryegrass, so it is more important to have a good weed free seedbed.

In the recent years, with the development of new ryegrass endophytes, tall fescue has become less popular.

In NZ it is mainly sown in dry areas for its summer growth and good clover content, performing best on clay soils, where its deeper rooting ability can utilise more soil moisture than ryegrass. It requires different pasture management than ryegrass, and this has been its main limitation in NZ. It needs to be grazed at the correct time in spring, more frequently than ryegrass, to prevent a loss of feed quality.

Tall fescue performs best under cattle grazing and can struggle to persist well under sheep grazing, where pastures are often grazed very short.

## Tall fescue cultivars

### *Grasslands Flecha*

Persistent, fine leaved, winter-active cultivar. *Flecha* persists through drought by becoming dormant during hot dry summers. Well suited to summer dry areas, where persistent pastures are required. Available with *Max P* endophyte.

### *Grasslands Advance*

Bred for improved establishment speed over the old cultivar *Grasslands Roa* (no longer available) while attempting to maintain the palatability of *Roa*. Has good rust resistance. Available with *Max P* endophyte.

### *SF Finesse Q*

Densely tillered, softly leaved fescue with an intermediate heading date. Does not contain endophyte.

### *Quantum II*

Selected for improved rust tolerance and softer leaves. Available with *Max P* or *Without* endophyte.