Top 10 Tips for Summer Sowing Pastures in WA

**Summer sowing involves dry-seeding either unscarified seed or pod of annual legumes between January and March, before the opening autumn rains.**

**Using hard seeded varieties of seradella and bladder clover, and seeding them early, allows time for the hard-seededness to break down. It gives you the opportunity for higher growth rates from your pastures at an earlier stage of the season.**

1. Choose weed free or ‘clean’ paddocks (those paddocks suitable normally for dry sowing in the cropping rotation).
2. Choose paddocks with a low history of group B herbicide (sulphonyl-urea) and clopyralid (Lontrel). Residues of these chemicals can cause root pruning even when only very small amounts are present.
3. Unscarified seed or pod should be drilled using a normal seeding rig, or top-dressed and harrowed; and planted no more than 1cm deep with an industry recommended granular inoculant and fertiliser types and rates.
4. The pasture species with the most suitable patterns of hard-seed breakdown for Summer Sowing include:
   a. Margarita French serradella (at a rate of 25-30kg/ha pod)
   b. AgWest® Bartolo bladder clover (at a rate of 20kg/ha seed)
5. Control weeds in the pasture early using a grass selective herbicide; and monitor insect numbers, particularly red-legged earth mite, and control as necessary.
6. Choose the right pasture variety for your soil type.
   a. Margarita serradella is suited to light soils with neutral to lower (acidic) pH.
   b. AgWest® Bartolo bladder clover is suited to heavier soils with a neutral to higher (alkaline) pH
7. Grazing can begin as soon as the pasture plants have reached the 4 to 5 leaf stage.
8. Stock should be removed in spring in Year 1 to allow seed set.
9. AgWest® Bartolo bladder clover and Margarita French serradella need to be planted to crop in Year 2, and left to pasture again in year 3 to optimise seed-set and to establish a seed bank. The paddock can then be cropped according to your cropping rotation.
10. The cost of pasture establishment can be reduced by producing your own seed or pod from a specialist nursery paddock. French serradella and bladder clover can be harvested with conventional grain harvesters.
Dried head and seeds of Bladder Clover
Photo courtesy of Angelo Loi,
Department of Agriculture and Food (WA)

Hard-seeded Serradella pods
Photo courtesy of Angelo Loi,
Department of Agriculture and Food (WA)

Summer sown Serradella pasture providing good quality, early feed (July 2011) at Cuballing

More information - www.westernaustralia.grainandgraze2.com.au