

# Lucerne Management

In this section our aim is to give you a basic understanding of how to best manage your Lucerne stand season to season once successfully established.

The word “used” stands for either grazing, hay, balage or silage use of your stand.

## Set Stocking

Although many new Lucerne cultivars have lower growing points than the older cultivars and are better suited to grazing than them. Therefore Lucerne should never be set stocked.

The main reason for this is that removal of the newly developing shoots when set stocked will reduce the life of the plant and will lead to weed infestation.

## Grazing management spring (September to November)

Ideally grazing in the spring should start when the crop height is between 0.20 -0.25 metres. During other seasons the use of your stand is based around the different growth stages of plants development.

Ewes and lambs can be slowly introduced onto Lucerne stands once the lambs are 2-3 weeks old. If grazing the aim is to have enough stock on the paddock so that the paddocks will be grazed off within 4-7 days.

The recovery time or resting period before you should re use your stand at this time of year should be between 30 and 40 days.

## Grazing management summer (December to February)

Once again paddocks are best rotationally grazed for between 7 to 10 days every 30 to 40 days. To achieve maximum weight gain stock grazed on nothing but Lucerne should get 2.5 to 4.0 kgs DM / Head / Day.

If you are planning to irrigate during this time of year delay doing so until the new growth has formed a canopy. This will help stop seedling weeds from getting established.

## Grazing management autumn (March to May)

During this period thoughts change from using your stand to looking after the life of it.

At least once during this time you should allow your stand achieve at least 50% flowering. By doing this you will allow the plant to restock its underground reserves. Lucerne stands should be used less frequently.

## Grazing management winter (June to September)

Lucerne normally stops growing after a series of hard winter frosts. A final clean up grazing should occur before the end of June. 7 to 10 days after this final “clean up” grazing has occurred the application of a suitable contact and residual herbicide should take place. Any hard grazing after this period will have a huge negative effect on the spring growth and should be avoided.

