

# Controlling Weeds in Improved Pastures

Grazag Agonomist  
Matt Foster



# The Preparation Phase

- Cannot overstate the importance of a clean up phase
- The use of Alternative chemistry to clean up problematic weeds during the crop
- Pre-Emergent herbicides prior to sowing (Especially Broadleaf crops)
- (E.g. Vulpia control in the 12 months leading up to a perennial pasture)
- Winter Cleaning - Simazine

# Fallow Preparation

- Timing is everything with your fallow sprays. Don't miss the seed set, especially with annual grasses such as Vulpia and Barley Grass.
- Make sure the weeds are actively growing. This is especially important with summer grasses, such as Couch and Crab Grass.
- Ensure weeds are NOT stressed (Moisture, Heat, Insect Pressure, Disease)
- Use the correct herbicide rate. Do NOT be tempted to cut rates, they are recommended for a reason. We do NOT want resistance down the track. (Eg Annual Ryegrass)

# What is the weed spectrum?

- What are the MAJOR weeds we are likely to encounter? Grasses or Broadleaf?
- Grass weeds are the MOST critical in perennial pastures, especially the highly invasive grasses such as:
  - Chilean Needle Grass
  - African Lovegrass
  - Serrated Tussock
  - Parramatta Grass
  - Coolatai Grass

# Problem with Grass weeds

- There is NO selective post emergent grass control once we have the perennial pasture in the ground. What we have not controlled before planting, cannot be controlled later. ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL
- Grass weeds are the yield and persistence THIEVES. They are highly competitive and rob moisture and nutrients from your improved species, as well as space and light. It becomes an unfair race with the pasture rarely winning.
- Other grass weeds include:
  - VULPIA (Rats Tail Fescue) – Allelopathic effect
  - BARLEY GRASS
  - TOAD RUSH (Not technically a grass but treated as such)

# Vulpia – Public enemy number 1

- Vulpia sets a prolific amount of seed (In excess of 150,000 seeds/m<sup>2</sup>)
- Vulpia has an allelopathic effect. It leaches a chemical from its roots that prevents the germination of other species around it (especially clovers), making it a one horse race. UNFAIR ADVANTAGE
- Completely chokes out grass pastures. Ruins a \$600+/Ha investment.
- Can be WINTER-CLEANED and SPRAY-TOPPED, but the damage can already be done, especially in a wet year when you can't get on the country with a boom-spray. 2021!

# What to look out for

- In the lead-up phase, what are the major weed issues and what burden will they likely cause.
- Do these weeds come with other issues:
- Allelopathic effect
- Disease Host (Marshmallow – Rust, Cereals – BYDV)
- Hard Seededness – How long will this weed be an issue
- Resistance Issues – Will herbicides available kill them completely (eg Wild Radish)
- Insect Hosts – Aphids (eg Brassica weeds)

# Broadleaf Weeds

- Broadleaf weeds are more for VANITY (May only reduce pasture yield by 15-20% unless they are prolific)
- Major broadleaf weeds in the district are:
  - Wireweed
  - Thistles (Spear, Nodding, Saffron, Slender, Variegated)
  - Green Amaranth
  - Shepherds Purse
  - Fleabane
  - Peppergrass
  - Stinging Nettle
  - Brassica Weeds (Turnip, Mustard, Wild Radish)

# Broadleaf weeds – The lesser of the two evils!

- We have a mountain of chemistry available for broadleaf weeds
- You MUST tailor the pasture mix to reflect the weed burden, so that you can make use of the best and available chemistry.
- (eg AVOID planting Chicory in paddocks that have high Thistle burden, as they are in the same family, leaving NO selective control options)
- Herbs (Chicory/Plantain) are best planted in paddocks with a grass weed burden, not a broadleaf problem. Only plant them in paddocks that are CLEAN for broadleaf weeds. You can always broadcast them in later.

# Control Options

- Phenoxy Herbicides form the backbone:
- MCPA
- Amine 625
- Lontrel
- Estercide
- 24D-B (Machete/Buttress)
- Starane
- Others include:
- Broadstrike, Jaguar, Siamzine, Bromicide (200 + MA), Roundup, Gramoxone.

# Summary

Planting an improved pasture represents a significant investment (Can be over \$700/ha including contractors), so **PLANNING IS VITAL**.

**DO NOT** take short-cuts. They cost you a bucket load of money (Lower yields and poor persistence)

**DO** a proper clean up and fallow. They help reduce weed seedbank, competition and save moisture for the crop.

To go straight from an unimproved pasture base to highly improved just relying on a few spray outs without significant clean up is **RECKLESS**. They **NATURALISE** very quickly.

Plan your paddocks, start preparation early and identify any other limiting factors (eg soil pH, aluminium toxicity, that may lead to poor results)

ARG a very  
good clean up  
phase



# Some Nasties!

