



# Biloela

## Buffel Grass

*Cenchrus ciliaris*

350mm+

5.5-8.0

Light to Heavy

AgriCOTE or Bare

### Key Features

- Taller, more robust buffel, later maturity
- Establishes readily in heavy soil types
- Deep extensive root system
- Greater drought tolerance

### Description

Biloela is taller and later maturing than USA and Gayndah and is more suited to the heavier soils, higher rainfall, and for cattle production.

They grow to 1.5 m producing large bluish-coloured leaves, and develop underground rhizomes. The ground shoots are not very dense, and secondary shoots appear along the tall flowering stems under light grazing. They flower later than the short types, producing densely packed, straw-coloured seeds on the flowering head. Biloela is fairly salt-tolerant but intolerant to waterlogging.

Buffel grass is a native of low rainfall tropical to sub-tropical areas from Africa, India and Indonesia.

It is a deep rooted Summer growing perennial with drought resistance and tolerant to heavy grazing or burning.

Buffel grass has the ability to respond quickly to any drought breaking rains. It will flower early but whilst flowering will continue to produce extra leaf and new shoots. The flower or seed head resembles the typical "fox tail".

It is sown in areas receiving an annual rainfall of between 350 and 1000mm. Because of its ability to tolerate low rainfall it can be grown in areas not suitable to Rhodes grass or Green Panic. It is less cold tolerant than Green Panic.

Mainly used as a permanent pasture, but can be used for hay or silage. Not suited to short-term pasture because too difficult to remove and binds nutrient.



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*Cenchrus ciliaris*

### Establishment

Recommended planting rates for AgriCOTE Pro-Tech for Biloela Buffel are:

**Marginal Dryland:** 4 - 6Kg per Hectare

**Good Dryland:** 8 - 12Kg per Hectare

**Irrigated:** 12-15Kg per Hectare

Fresh seed often has high level of dormancy. Germination rate can be improved with storage of 6-18 months after harvest or by separating caryopses. Total live seed content is commonly 30-50%. Establishment is difficult on hard setting and heavy clay soils. Establishes readily if competition is controlled. Sown 0-1 cm deep at 3-4 kg seed/ha, the lower rate on sandy-loam soils. Whilst it grows on a wide variety of soils it prefers the higher fertility scrub soils. It has been found that the addition of extra phosphorus aid in seeding vigour at establishment. The germination of seed improves with age and any seed sown whilst dormant will remain in the soil until the following growing season. The seed is "fluffy" therefore to overcome any difficulty at sowing use AgriCOTE Pro-Tech or it should be bulked up with other free flowing material. Best sown through a roller drum, grass airseeder, modified fertiliser spreader or modified combine. Sow at and rely on follow-up rain for establishment.

### Management / Agronomy

Buffel grass is slow to establish and grazing may need to be delayed anything up to 12 months, depending on establishment conditions. If possible, it is best to avoid grazing in the first year until after seed-set, which ensures plants are well-established, and gives lighter stands the opportunity to thicken up in subsequent years. Once established, buffel grass is very tolerant of regular cutting or grazing. Since quality declines rapidly with age, buffel grass pastures should be grazed sufficiently regularly and heavily to maintain in a leafy, more nutritious stage.

### Pest / Diseases Resistance

The most serious disease is buffel grass blight caused by the fungus, *Magnaporthe grisea* (anamorph *Pyricularia grisea*), a rampant leaf spot disease that reduces quality and production of forage and seed, and in some cases, destroys stands. *Pyricularia grisea* is a highly variable pathogen and differential responses have been found to occur, with some varieties of *Cenchrus ciliaris* being resistant to the various races of the pathogen. Other fungal species causing damage are *Fusarium oxysporum*, *Bipolaris sp.*, and *Claviceps sp.* Alternative host for *Claviceps fusiformis* is pearl millet (*Pennisetum glaucum*).

### Performance

Yields depend greatly on soil fertility and growing conditions, but are mostly in the range of 2-9 t/ha DM, and under ideal conditions, up to 24 t/ha DM.

Crude protein values are mostly in the range of 6-16%, and IVDMD and Crude protein digestibility from 50-60%, depending on age of growth, cultivar, and soil fertility (incl. fertiliser use). P levels are usually higher than in other tropical grasses and range from 0.15-0.65% in the DM.

### Animal Production

Can carry up to 1 steer or 6 sheep/ha, depending on rainfall and soil fertility. Cattle can gain up to 180-200 kg/hd/yr at 2 ha/beast on fertile soils under good growing conditions.

Generally less palatable than *Panicum coloratum* (Bambatsii Panic) and *P. maximum* (Gatton/Green Panic).

Toxicity: Oxalate levels can cause 'big head' (*Osteodystrophia fibrosa*) in horses, and oxalate poisoning in young or hungry sheep. However, with soluble oxalate levels of 1-2% in the DM, there is rarely a problem with mature ruminants.

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