

BRASSICA & FORAGE CROPS

PRACTICAL ADVICE &
MANAGEMENT GUIDE

www.barenbrug.co.uk



WELCOME

Barenbrug - grass experts since 1904.

Our profession is plant breeding; selecting and developing quality varieties with the essential, unique characteristics to meet the ever-increasing demands from farmers for top quality forage grass.

From its founding days in 1904 the Royal Barenbrug Group has grown into a global seed company with breeding and research stations on six continents.

Still privately owned, our knowledge and experience of grass seed is second to none.

We specialise in plant breeding, seed production and the international marketing of forage grass, forage crops and turf grasses.

With over 700 employees and operating companies in 18 countries on 6 continents, we have been the leading grass seed business in the world for over 100 years.



BRASSICA & FORAGE CROPS

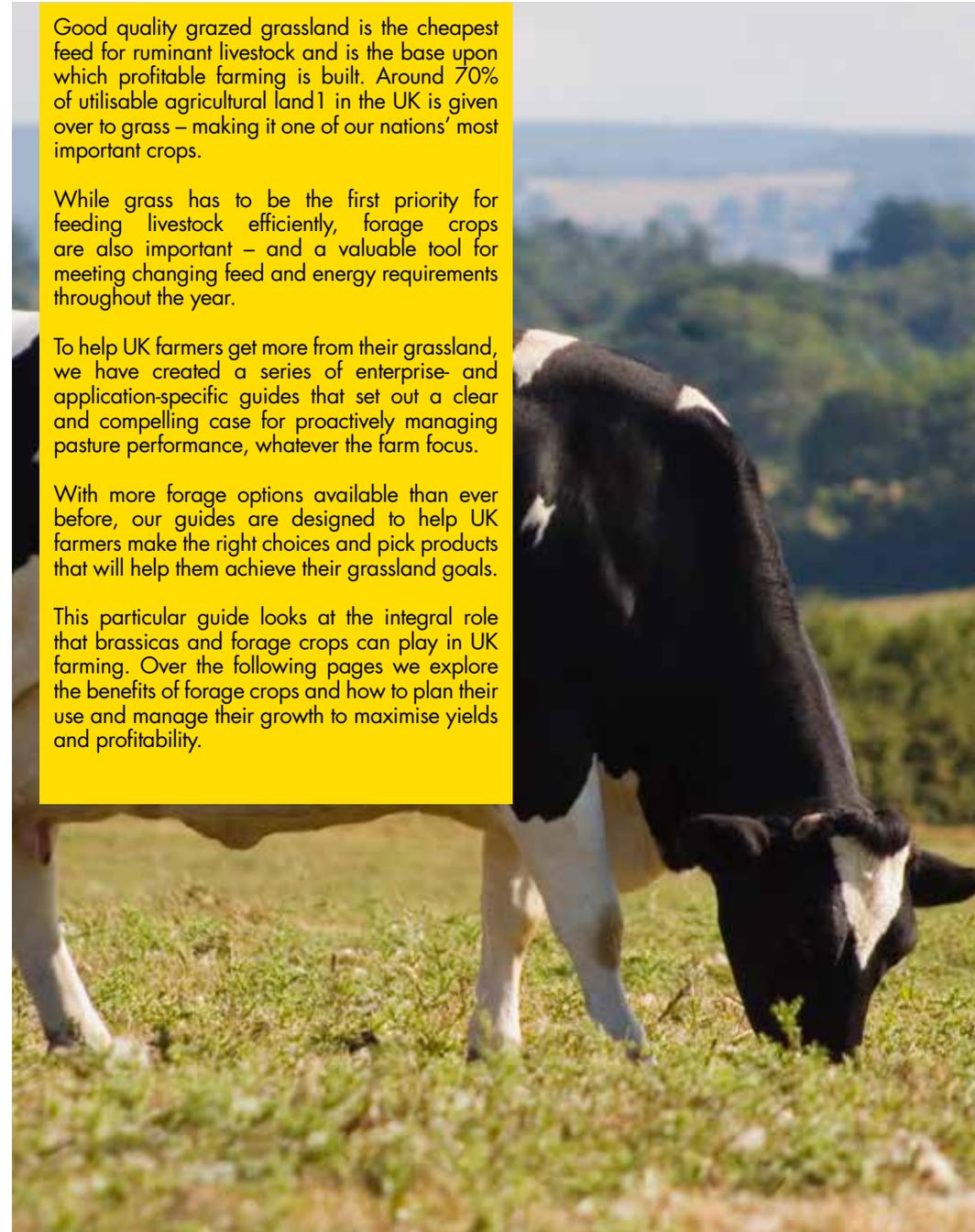
Good quality grazed grassland is the cheapest feed for ruminant livestock and is the base upon which profitable farming is built. Around 70% of utilisable agricultural land in the UK is given over to grass – making it one of our nations' most important crops.

While grass has to be the first priority for feeding livestock efficiently, forage crops are also important – and a valuable tool for meeting changing feed and energy requirements throughout the year.

To help UK farmers get more from their grassland, we have created a series of enterprise- and application-specific guides that set out a clear and compelling case for proactively managing pasture performance, whatever the farm focus.

With more forage options available than ever before, our guides are designed to help UK farmers make the right choices and pick products that will help them achieve their grassland goals.

This particular guide looks at the integral role that brassicas and forage crops can play in UK farming. Over the following pages we explore the benefits of forage crops and how to plan their use and manage their growth to maximise yields and profitability.



REASONS TO INVEST

Whatever the size of enterprise, maximising home-grown feed makes sense. Providing major health benefits for animals, as well as improvements in live weight gains, home-grown feed can have a positive impact on farm finances. It can also be beneficial to the environment.

Forage brassica crops are grown widely throughout the UK both as a supplement and as an alternative to pastures in animal production systems. Brassicas are important because they can produce high yields of high quality forage that can be fed on farm from early summer through to late winter. As well as being a feed substitute to pasture, brassicas can act as a break crop during pasture renewal. They can help with weed, pest and disease reduction and create better soil conditions and cleaner seedbeds for establishing new pastures.

Benefits of brassica & forage Crops

- Strategic crop in pasture renovation – makes regressing easier i.e. fewer weed pressures
- Means of controlling spring surplus and shifting feed from spring into summer or autumn to winter
- Breaking up insect pest cycles to help renovate pasture
- High animal performance potential
- A number of options with a lot of flexibility
- Consistently high quality ME 10.5-13, proteins 16-24%.



HUSBANDRY

As with most things, planning is the key to success.

A simple planning checklist will help you achieve your goals and can be kept simple.

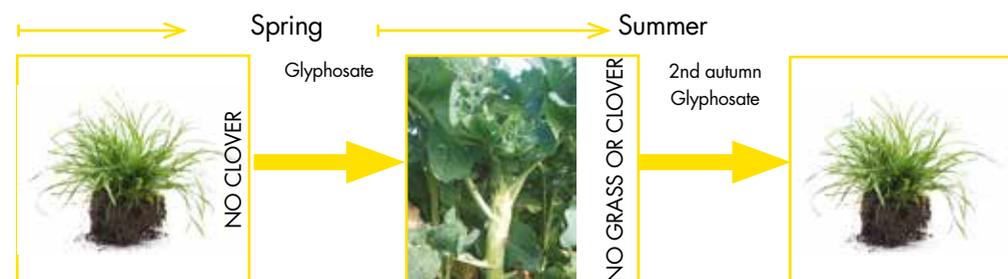
We recommend:

- Identify pasture in autumn for renewing and soil test (pH problems can take six months to fix)
- Noting which fields have poor performing pastures; undesirable species; and low legume content
- Checking if fertility status has been limiting pasture production and working out how to address this to ensure a good brassica crop and a successful renovation phase?
- Planting brassicas followed by new grass in autumn (or vice versa for a winter brassica planting)

Many problems with brassica production arise from poor sowing techniques and inadequate seed bed preparation.

Once a good crop has been established, the aim should be to utilise it with minimum wastage.

Find out more in the feeding guide at the rear of this book.



The above figure is an example of an approach to new pasture establishment and can be applied from spring as a summer cropping rotation with an autumn reseed, or an autumn sprayout as a winter cropping option with a spring reseed or as a spring cropping option (kale) with a reseed in the following spring.

This approach to reseeding helps break perennial weed cycles using glyphosate and can help eliminate grass weeds such as black and meadow grasses. It is also an opportunity to break insect pest cycles leading to better grass and clover establishment and encourages forward planning and allows drainage and fertility issues to be addressed resulting in better pasture establishment.

SOIL MANAGEMENT



Get soil nutrition right to optimise crop growth and quality.

It isn't the animal or the bag that feeds the crop; it's the soil - so looking after soil fertility and structure are the two key fundamentals of any good grassland management scheme. Soil pH is more important than NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) because in order for nutrients to be optimally available to the plant's roots, pH must be maintained at 6.0 or above, especially for clover swards.

P & K levels should be maintained at Index 2 (Moderate + in Scotland) and soils should be sampled every three to five years, depending on management practice and rotation. Where silage or hay is being made, remember to feed the crop as well as addressing any soil deficiencies. N should be applied when conditions allow and as appropriate depending on field use e.g., grazing or silage. N can have an acidifying effect on the soil, so higher N users may also need to lime more frequently.

Remember to consider trace element status of the farm too. Some bedrocks are deficient in particular elements, which are important to breeding sheep. If the elements are not present in the soil, they cannot be taken up by grass and so need to be supplied by other methods e.g. supplementation, fertilisers or boluses.

Routine soil sampling should be conducted every 4 – 5 years. In grassland take at least 20 samples, 10 cm deep, across a representative field area avoiding gateways and hedges etc.

- pH
- P & K
- Mg

PRE-SOWING

Preparation and fertiliser

Typically, less productive fields are sown out into brassicas, often meaning a crop is established into soil that is in less than optimum condition. Brassicas tend to differ from other crops in certain aspects of their fertiliser requirements. Brassica yields are sensitive to nitrogen and phosphorus status. It's also important to consider trace elements such as molybdenum and boron but always base any actions on a soil test.

Phosphorus

Early purpling stunted and erect leaves are an indicator of P deficiency (this can also be induced by cool weather, so herbage testing is the best form of identification).

Sulphur (S)

Sulphur deficiency is characterised by stunted, pale or yellowed growth (particularly young growth) and leaf curling and distortion.

Boron (B)

The condition "brown heart" in bulb brassicas is the most common symptom of boron deficiency. Other brassicas may show swelling, hollowing, browning and rotting of stems. (Next time you're shopping for broccoli, check the stem. If it's hollow, the plant was boron deficient).

Nitrogen (N)

Paleness usually indicates N deficiency. When establishing a brassica into a run out field, the crop will require starter N and a good rule of thumb is a post-establishment application at 80% canopy cover (don't worry about driving through your crop, it has time to recover). In minimum tillage situations, N is generally locked up by the soil because unlike cultivated situations, plants are broken down by microbial activity, which temporarily locks up N. This may need to be considered and compensated for at planting time.

Poor brassica fertility leads to inconsistent yields resulting in underfeeding in some situations as seen in the photo below:

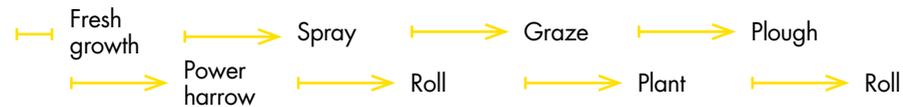


PLANTING

Planting

Conventional cultivation is generally the most reliable way of eliminating weeds and establishing brassicas. Make it easy for your grass establishment following the brassica crop and kill off all fresh growth with a spray, plough and bury all dead plant material, power harrow or cultivate and remember its important to roll pre and post planting.

Spray and cultivate



A full cultivation example

Spray

Each tiller requires 5-10cm of actively growing leaf for a successful kill.

Plough

After a successful kill has been achieved – bury all plant material by ploughing:

Power harrow

Aim:

- Produce the desired seedbed with minimum cost
- Brassicas, clovers, ryegrasses, etc. require a seedbed that is fine, firm, warm, moist and weed-free

Roll

This helps with:

- Even establishment
- Keeps moisture in soil

This process makes it easier for ryegrass establishment

Sow

Sow the seed no deeper than 10mm.

A perfect seed bed is firm, friable, weed-free and consolidated.



PLANTING

Direct drilling

Direct-drilling is suitable if the spray control of weeds is successful and fertiliser applications are considered carefully. Use slugbait at the time of sowing and remember, slug bait will be less effective if broadcasted. Applied at drilling will have the best kill.

Seed must not be planted deeper than 10mm and always roll after sowing!

Spray and cultivate



A good plant kill is achieved prior to planting, the seed depth is considered carefully and rolling post planting is always carried out.



WHICH CROPS?

Which crop should I sow?

Picking the right forage crop can feel confusing. Where do you start? Here are some key considerations to bear in mind:

- Maturity date – How long do you have to the first grazing?
- Identify feed deficit and when feed is required and select options based on the appropriate maturity date
- Do you need a single grazed option? Perhaps bulk feed over a short period (e.g. turnips)
- Would a multi-grazed later maturing option work (e.g. forage rape) i.e. a crop that is planted in late summer or autumn for winter feed later than turnips.
- Could a high yielding, single grazed winter crop (e.g. kale) be useful?

Getting the correct crop for the right stock class is also important and should play a big part in your decision-making.



Figure 1: Sheep not utilising brassicas effectively.



Figure 2: Keeper Kale with excellent utilisation.

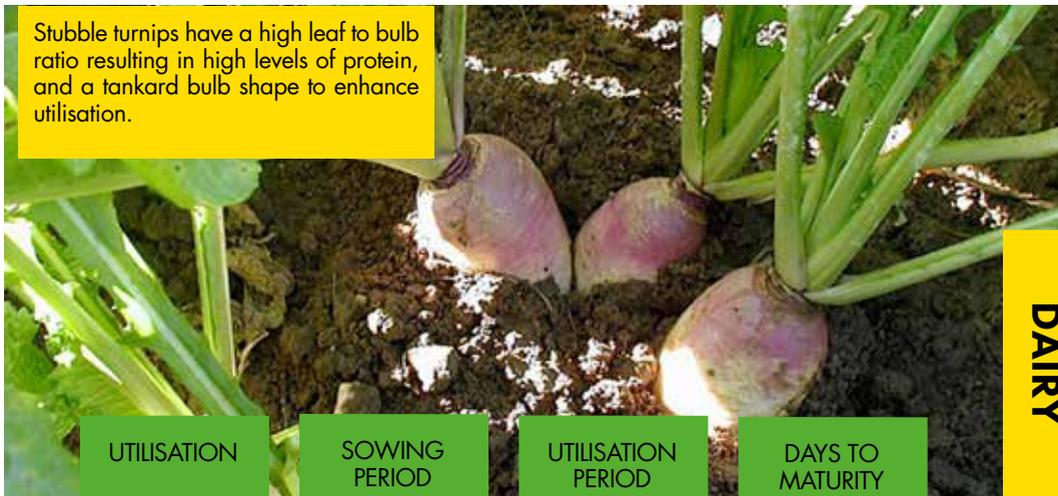
	Sowing rate (kg/acre)	Days to grazing	Other considerations
Spring planting (for summer feed)			
Barabas - Stubble Turnips	2	60	Reliable moisture
Barcoli - Forage Rape	2	90	Sporadic moisture
Spring planted (for winter feed)			
Keeper - Kale	2	170-220	Smaller stock, mild winters
Caledonian - Kale	2	170-220	Larger stock, harsher winters
Autumn planting			
Barabas - Stubble Turnips	1.5	60-90	Mild winters
Barcoli - Forage Rape	2	90 days	Harsher winters

SOWING & UTILISATION GUIDE	MONTHS											
	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
STUBBLE TURNIP	USE	USE		SOW	SOW		SOW	SOW	USE	USE	USE	USE
FORAGE RAPE						SOW	SOW	SOW		USE	USE	USE
KALE	USE	USE	USE	SOW	SOW	SOW				USE	USE	USE
LUCERNE	USE	USE	SOW	SOW	USE	USE	USE	USE	USE	USE	USE	USE
VETCH	USE	USE	SOW	SOW	SOW	USE	USE	USE	SOW	SOW	USE	USE
PLANTAIN	USE	USE	SOW	SOW					SOW	SOW	USE	USE
CHICORY				SOW	SOW	SOW	SOW	SOW				

BARABAS

STUBBLE TURNIP

Stubble turnips have a high leaf to bulb ratio resulting in high levels of protein, and a tankard bulb shape to enhance utilisation.



DAIRY

BEEF

SHEEP

UTILISATION

Graze in situ

SOWING PERIOD

Spring & Autumn

UTILISATION PERIOD

Summer & Winter

DAYS TO MATURITY

60-90 Days

Barabas is a variety which has been very successful wherever it has been used throughout the UK and with some farmers proclaiming as the best stubble turnip variety they have encountered!

Advantages

- High leaf to bulb ratio resulting in high levels of protein
- Full-leaved late tetraploid bulbing with very good early vigour
- Proven very palatable to grazing animals with good disease resistance
- Early maturing (60-90 days) for excellent summer/winter feed.

Sowing rate: Spring sown at 3kg/acre (7.5kg/ha) for high leaf percentage
Autumn sown at 2kg/acre (5kg/ha) for larger bulb percentage.

Pack sizes: Available in pack sizes of 5kg or 25kg.

Management advice

- Plant two-thirds of the crop area in early maturing Barabas and one-third with a late maturing variety, such as Barcoli, at the same time (**not together**). This will provide a high quality summer feed that can be grazed from 60-150 days after sowing.

BARCOLI

FORAGE RAPE

A multi-purpose forage rape with excellent autumn / early winter feed potential.



DAIRY

BEEF

SHEEP

UTILISATION

Graze in situ

SOWING PERIOD

Spring & Early Summer

UTILISATION PERIOD

Autumn & Winter

DAYS TO MATURITY

90-110 Days

Barcoli is a flexible forage option. It can be spring sown for a late summer feed behind turnips or autumn sown for winter grazing.

Advantages

- Good regrowth potential with excellent winter keeping properties
- Good aphid tolerance
- Fast growing leafy catch crop
- High protein content
- Longer lasting than stubble turnips
- Flexible sowing period
- Sheep, dairy or beef production.

Management advice

- Plant two-thirds of the crop area in early maturing Barabas and one-third in late maturing variety Barcoli at the same time (**not together**) to provide high quality summer feed that can be grazed from 60-150 days after sowing.

Sowing rate: Drilled: 2.5kg/acre (6kg/ha). Broadcast: 4kg/acre (10kg/ha).

Pack sizes: Available in pack sizes of 5kg or 25kg.

CALEDONIAN

KALE

Kale is a well-proven, highly adaptable fodder crop which consistently provides very high yields of succulent green fodder.



DAIRY

BEEF

SHEEP

Caledonian is a high yielding marrow stem type kale with clubroot tolerance. Its huge yield makes it ideal for utilisation by dairy and beef cattle.

Potential

- High-yielding giant type kale with potential yield of 18,000kg DM/ha

Advantages

- Excellent tolerance to frost
- Good aphid tolerance
- Very high dry matter yields
- Good winter hardiness
- Good clubroot tolerance.

Limitations

- Suited to bigger cattle and colder climates

Sowing rate: Drilled: 1–2kg/acre (2.5–5kg/ha). Broadcast: 3kg/acre (7.5kg/ha).
Pack Sizes: Available in pack sizes of 5kg or 25kg (untreated), 2kg (treated).

KEEPER

KALE

Kale is a well-proven, highly adaptable fodder crop which consistently provides very high yields of succulent green fodder.



DAIRY

BEEF

SHEEP

Keeper is a medium height kale with excellent leaf to stem ratio (greater than 50% leaf).

Advantages

- Leafy type for sheep production
- Excellent crop utilisation due to highly digestible stem
- Superior animal production due to enhanced forage quality
- Good regrowth if lightly grazed during late summer.

Limitations

- Suited to smaller stock classes and warmer climates.

Sowing rate: Drilled: 1–2kg/acre (2.5–5kg/ha). Broadcast: 3kg/acre (7.5kg/ha).
Pack Sizes: Available in pack sizes of 5kg or 25kg (untreated), 2kg (treated).

BRASSICA FEEDING GUIDE

Tools needed

- Length of alkathine 2.66m or slightly shorter to accommodate a joiner
- Join the ends together to form a ring, this creates an area of 0.5m²
- Empty seed bag
- Knife or other cutting instrument
- Hand-held scales
- Paper and pen/pencil
- Calculator.

Take five to six samples per field

Choose the sample areas from parts of the field, which are representative of the entire field and throw the alkathine ring onto the crop.

- Any stem/bulb bases that fall within the ring circumference are counted to be within the sample area (0.5m²)
- Any leaf/branches that belong to a plant with a stem base that is outside the ring are to be excluded from the material being weighed
- Remove all material by either cutting the crop down to about 1 inch from the ground e.g. for kales or pulling bulbs and leaves (ensuring dirt is removed) from swedes and turnips, put into bag and weigh.

Once all the samples have been taken use the following formula:

1. Collate sample weights (kg) and take average
Eg. 5.3, 5.6, 5.4, 5.9, 5.8 Average weight = 5.6 kg
2. Multiply by 2 to get kg/m²
Eg. 5.6kg x 2 = 11.2 kg/m²
3. Multiply by 10,000 to convert to kg/ha (there are 10,000m²/ha)
Eg. 11.2 kg/m² x 10,000 m²/ha = 112,000 kg fresh material/ha
4. Multiply by appropriate DM% (see sensitivity table below)
112,000 kg fresh material/ha x e.g. 10%DM = 11,200 kgDM/ha.

It is important to know the correct dry matter percentage as small differences in DM percentages can account for big differences in feed available as shown below.

To work out how long the feed available will last and how much feed to offer daily, farmers need to know the requirements of their animals. Below is an example in hectares to keep it simple.

A crop of turnips produces 12,000kg DM/ha and the farmer has 100 lactating cows which have a requirement of 5kg per head/day and assuming the utilisation of turnips is 80% (12,000kg DM x 0.80 = 9,600kg (down throat)).

100 cows x 5kg = 500kg of DM consumed per day

9,600kg offered / 500kg = 19.2 days

Therefore the hectare area should be split into 19 days breaks to achieve the 500kg feed needed.

kg fresh matter	11% DM	12% DM	13% DM	14% DM	15% DM
112,000	12,320	13,440	14,650	15,680	16,800

Sensitivity table



BAR FINISHER

MIXTURE

BAR FINISHER is a mix of chicory, white clover, red clover and plantain with excellent animal performance potential. It produces a leafy, high quality feed over spring, summer and autumn when traditional pastures can decrease in quality.



DAIRY

BEEF

SHEEP

UTILISATION

Graze in situ

SOWING PERIOD

Spring & Autumn

UTILISATION PERIOD

Spring, Summer & Autumn

BAR FINISHER can be used as a six month or two year crop depending on the farm system and/or grazing management approach. The clover in the mixture will provide nitrogen to feed the crop, and will also fill any space not occupied by herbs. The red clover component, alongside the herbs, will provide a high quality feed through a dry season, helping to reduce risk in summer dry areas.

- Highly palatable, providing an excellent feed for high live weight gains
- Provides high quality feed through summer that recovers quickly after grazing
- Anthelmintic properties from the chicory component
- High protein option for dairy farmers
- Clover provides fixed nitrogen
- High mineral content, particularly zinc, potassium and copper
- Grass can be established into the mixture.

IN THE BAG



1.50kg	Ens^{gn}RED	Red Clover Blend
1.00kg	Ens^{gn}	White Clover Blend
1.50kg	TONIC	Plantain
1.00kg	COMMANDER	Chicory

Pack size 10kg (2 acres).
Sowing rate: 5kg per acre.

TONIC

PLANTAIN

Tonic plantain can be used to boost summer milk production and to finish lambs. Historically used in grassland mixtures it is suited to many soil types and can increase daily intakes during the summer.



DAIRY

BEEF

SHEEP

UTILISATION

Graze in situ

SOWING PERIOD

Spring & Autumn

UTILISATION PERIOD

Summer & Winter

DAYS TO MATURITY

60-90 Days

Advantages

- When fresh, feed value is greater than ryegrass/clover
- Tolerates frequent grazing
- High in protein (up to 23%)
- Feed quality (at times) similar to ryegrass
- Potential for pasture species alone!
- Tap rooted herb that withstands drought and higher temperatures in the summer.

Limitations

- Plantain is not as drought tolerant as chicory or red clover.

Sowing rate: 2kg/acre (5kg/ha) in a grassland mixture, 8-10kg/acre (19-24kg/ha) as a special purpose crop.

Pack sizes: Available in pack sizes of 5kg or 25kg.

COMMANDER

CHICORY

A true perennial chicory that lasts more than one year. Commander produces significant yields of high protein forage, especially when mixed with red clover. Chicory is a perennial herb, which is an excellent source of high quality feed for finishing stock.



DAIRY

BEEF

SHEEP

UTILISATION

Graze in situ

SOWING PERIOD

Spring & Summer

UTILISATION PERIOD

Eight weeks post-sowing

Potential

- >300 g/hd/d – rotationally grazed
- High MJME protein and high/variable mineral content (zinc)
- Easily digested.

Advantages

- Multi graze option – recovering quickly after grazing
- High dry matter production
- Persistent with thick, deep tap root, delivering drought tolerance
- Can be grown as a pure stand or sown with grass seed
- Performs better in dry conditions
- Perennial – spreads establishment cost
- Low animal health risk.

Limitations

- Limited cool season DM production/grazing
- Management in second season
- Seed head control
- Needs a nitrogen source – ideally establish with Ensign clover blends.

Sowing rate: 3kg/acre (7.5kg/ha) as a straight and with clover.
Pack sizes: Available in pack sizes of 5kg or 25kg.

ARTÉMIS

LUCERNE

Lucerne is a highly nutritious forage for livestock. It combines good digestibility with high proteins providing excellent milk yields or daily live weight gains. A more mature hay crop would be more suitable for feeding young stock.



DAIRY

BEEF

SHEEP

UTILISATION

Grazing and Silage

SOWING PERIOD

Spring

UTILISATION PERIOD

Year-round

DAYS TO MATURITY

Approx 40 Days

Potential

- One of the most underrated and underutilised forage crops available to livestock farmers in the UK
- To utilise lucerne, ensure a minimum of 50% flowering (50% of the tallest stems have a flower) prior to the first grazing/cutting. If the stand is weedy at establishment it can be grazed/cut ONCE if it is 15-20cm tall and then left to flower to a minimum of 50%
- >300 - 500 g/hd/d – rotationally grazed or cut
- High MJME and high protein, which is easily digested.

Advantages

- Perennial - Well managed crops can persist for up to 5 years
- Performs well in free draining, drier environments due to tap roots
- Dual purpose.

Limitations

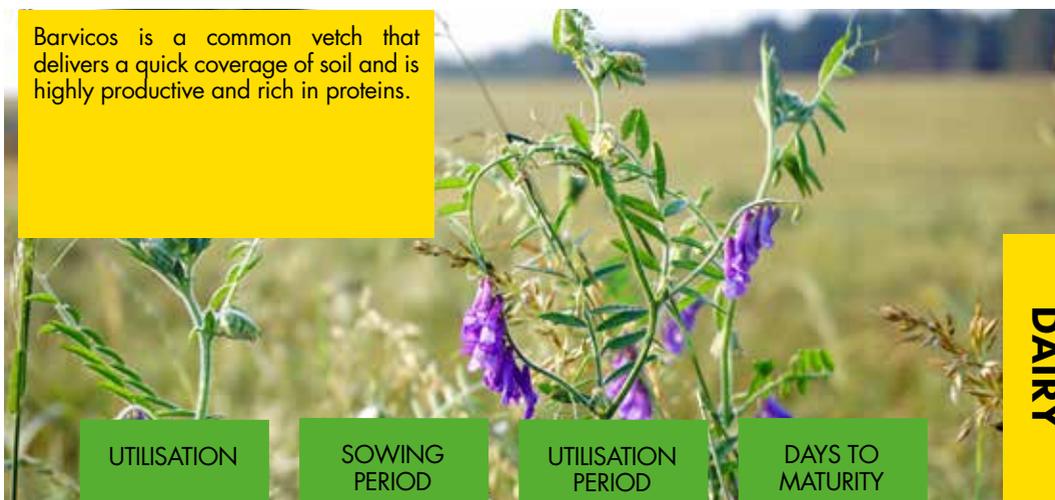
- Legume – pH 6.0 and high levels of P to establish
- Requires good management
- For more information and advice on management, please contact us for the guide.

Sowing rate: 8-10kg/acre (20-25kg/ha). Drill at 5-12mm deep on normal soils or up to 25mm on light sandy soils.
Pack sizes: Available in pack sizes of 25kg.

BARVICOS

VETCH

Barvicos is a common vetch that delivers a quick coverage of soil and is highly productive and rich in proteins.



DAIRY

BEEF

SHEEP

UTILISATION

Cutting/
Silage

SOWING PERIOD

Spring &
Autumn

UTILISATION PERIOD

Summer &
Winter

DAYS TO MATURITY

Approx
70-100 Days

A common vetch that fixes large amounts of nitrogen and is high in protein. Barvicos can be used for annual forage production either alone or in a mixture with grasses. It is also ideal for green manuring.

Barvicos has vigorous growth and is winter hardy. It will establish and grow well on most soil types, helping to soak up nutrients and hold in the soil for use by spring cropping or reseeding.

Vetch can be used typically 70-100 days after sowing, when 30-50% of the plants have flowered.

Advantages

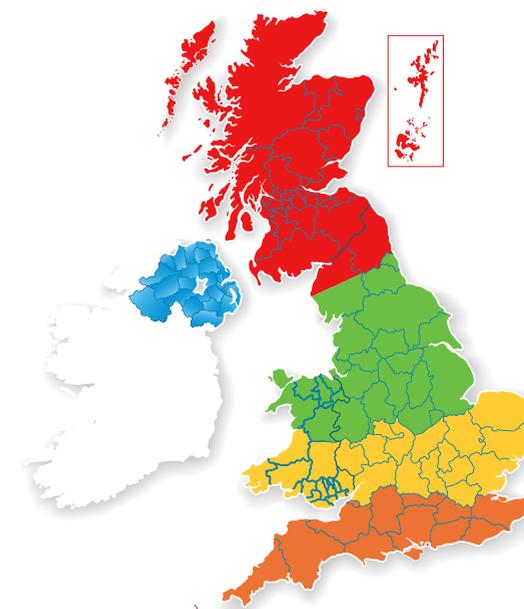
- Deep rooting and improves soil structure
- Quick coverage of soil
- Highly productive and protein rich forage variety
- Can be sown both in spring and autumn
- This vetch can be sown either as monoculture or as part of mixtures with other species, such as clovers and/or annual grasses
- Good resistance to colder temperatures
- Good resistance against diseases.

Sowing rate: 16-20kg/acre (40-50kg/ha).
It is recommended to sow vetch at a depth of 2-3 cm.

Pack sizes: Available in pack sizes of 25kg.

CONTACTS

AGRICULTURE TECHNICAL TEAM



	Roger Bacon Regional Sales Manager	m: 07889 460750 e: rbacon@barenbrug.co.uk	REGION: North of England
	James Ingles Head of Agriculture	m: 07801 188201 e: jingles@barenbrug.co.uk	REGION: East, Midlands & South Wales
	Latham Gibbins Regional Sales Manager	m: 07710 022043 e: lgibbins@barenbrug.co.uk	REGION: South & South West England
	Mhairi Dawson Research and Development Manager	m: 07775 814397 e: mdawson@barenbrug.co.uk	REGION: Scotland.
	David Linton Regional Sales Manager	m: 07740 063315 e: dlinton@barenbrug.co.uk	REGION: Northern Ireland.



CONDITIONS OF SALE

In case of unavailability Barenbrug UK Limited reserves the right to substitute any variety in any mixture with one of similar merit.

Any change will be detailed on the bag label.

The placing of an order constitutes an acceptance of our terms and conditions of sale by the buyer.

Full terms and conditions can be found at www.barenbrug.co.uk.

Contact your local distributor
01359 272000 | 01324 633188
www.barenbrug.co.uk | info@barenbrug.co.uk



Barenbrug UK Ltd,
33 Perkins Road,
Rougham Industrial Estate,
Bury St Edmunds,
Suffolk
IP30 9ND

Barenbrug UK Ltd,
Units 5-7 Abbots Road,
Bankside Industrial Estate
Falkirk,
Scotland
FK2 7XP