

Megamax[®]059 Panic grass

Panicum maximum

Tropical



550mm+



5.5–8.0



Wide range of soils
of reasonable fertility



AgriCote

Suggested sowing rates
(AgriCote coated seed)

Marginal dryland: 4–6kg/ha

Ideal dryland: 8–12kg/ha

Irrigated: 15–20kg/ha

Key features

- Quality feed – high leaf to stem ratio
- Higher biomass production than Gatton and Green panic
- Greater persistence than Gatton and Green panic varieties
- Adaptable to variable rainfall environments - rapid response to rainfall
- Highly palatable, readily eaten by all stock types
- Well suited to grazing or cutting
- Cool season and shade tolerance
- Early season growth – great winter bounce back

Megamax[®]059 is a new 'Gatton' panic grass (*Panicum maximum*) type. Megamax[®]059 was selected in Australia by the Future Farming Industry CRC, DAFWA, NSW DPI and Barenbrug. It is a new variety of panic grass and one of the first sub-tropical perennial grass varieties selected for both tropical and sub-tropical Australia — with the field evaluation undertaken in both temperate WA, northern NSW and QLD. It was selected for superior growth characteristics including increased production, higher persistence and cool season tolerance in comparison to other commercial sub-tropical grass cultivars. Leaf blades are large with multiple tillering characteristics, producing a high leaf to stem ratio.

Agronomy and management

Megamax[®]059 is well suited to tropical and sub-tropical regions, being very well suited to WA, along with areas of QLD and subtropical NSW. It performs best on deep, fertile soils and will tolerate varying soil types provided they are well drained. Will not tolerate prolonged waterlogging, salinity or very acidic soils. Megamax[®]059 can tolerate frosts, with the tops being burned off and recovering during the onset of warmer conditions. It exhibits early season growth coming out of winter, with best growth in early spring, better than either Rhodes grass or buffel. Being shade tolerant, it can be grown successfully under tree lines, open forest or plantation. Megamax[®]059 can tolerate extended dry periods and is also tolerant of short term flooding by moving water.

Establishment

Megamax[®]059 has exhibited improved establishment vigour to Gatton Panic. Seed can be drilled or broadcast and being a small seed, should be planted ideally at 5mm and no more than 1cm deep. Seed to soil contact is important. The use of press wheels or, on non-hard setting soils rolling after sowing, will greatly improve germination and establishment by providing ample seed to soil contact. Care should be taken not to plant in the hottest summer weather without adequate moisture – the seed must maintain close contact with wet soil for about 3–4 days to establish. Best sown before a strong chance of follow up rain. The use of AgriCote coated seed will greatly improve establishment success.

Fertiliser/nutrition

The use of AgriCote coated seed ensures essential macro and micronutrients are immediately available to the seedling. Responds to nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. N and P fertiliser is recommended at sowing, banded away from the seed. A post-emergence application of 100–150kg/ha of urea in pure stands will assist in stimulating stand development. Maintenance fertiliser is needed for pure grass swards, especially under cut-and-carry. Inadequate N leads to weakening of the stand and invasion by less desirable competitive species. Maintenance dressings of a minimum of 25–50kg/ha/year N are required to promote healthy, productive stands on less fertile soils. A maintenance fertiliser program is recommended to replace nutrient removed over time, particularly at high stocking densities. The addition of a companion legume can aid in the supply of Panic N requirement. Use of a soil test will form the foundation of a suitable fertiliser program.

Growth habit

Megamax[®]059 is a short-medium panic grass type, being an erect, loosely tufted perennial that forms clumps. The species roots down at the lower nodes. It has good synchronisation of flowering that provides a more even maturity and high seed production.

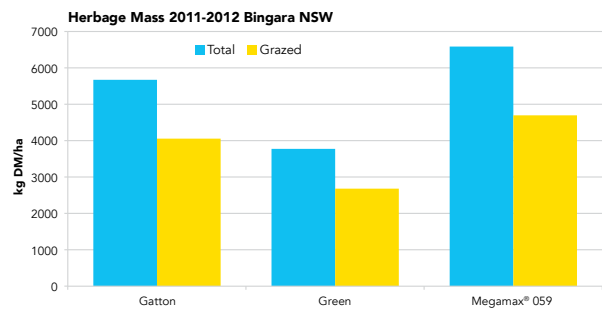
Compatibility (with other species)

Megamax[®]059 performs well in a sole stand or as part of a pasture mix. Grasses include Rhodes grass, Bambatsi panic, Digitaria, Setaria and Bluegrasses. Combines well with legumes such as Burgundy bean, Siratro, Desmodium, Butterfly pea, Centro, Glycine, Stylo, Desmanthus, Lucerne, Medic, Serradella and Clover.

Uses

Megamax[®]059 is an excellent option for high input, intensive grazing or hay cutting operations. Can be used as a permanent pasture or as a short to medium term pasture ley.

Performance



Cv/Line	NDF (%)	ADF (%)	CP (%)	DMD (%)
Megamax [®] 059	59.1	27.7	14.3	65.2
Gatton	58.9	24.6	13.3	63.2
Green	63.7	29.0	14.1	63.3

Forage data collected at Tamworth NSW

Persistence

Megamax[®]059 is a strong perennial, demonstrating improved persistence over Gatton and Green Panic under 3 years of grazing trials in Bingara and Tamworth NSW, along with Badgingarra field Station in WA. All panic grasses require well drained soils and rotational grazing to persist in the short to medium term. Poor persistence occurs in areas with a combination of frequent frosts and cold, wet soils. This variety re-establishes quickly after long dry periods due to its robust root system. Being a prolific seed producer, regeneration from new seedlings will aid in persistence. Long term persistence is dependent on adequate nutrition, moisture and ideal grazing management.

Toxicity

Pure stands of panic grass can cause photosensitisation in some situations, while also causing colic if eaten too wet or in excess.

Management

The success of a pasture will depend on first season grazing management. Panic should not be grazed in the first year until plants become well established, ideally after an initial seed set and drop. Continuous heavy grazing of young regrowth can kill plants. The high palatability of panic often results in it being preferentially grazed in favour of less palatable grass species in a pasture mix and as such, grazing management will be required to maintain persistence. Withstands heavy grazing during good seasons but is inadvisable during dry periods as recovery is slowed. Heavy grazing is not advisable during autumn as plant mortality can occur due to frost. Susceptible to frequent, low cutting. Should not be cut or grazed below 30cm, ideally cut or grazed at 4 weekly intervals to obtain the best balance between quality and quantity.

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