Guidelines for using balansa clover

Balansa clover is an annual clover, which thrives in winter wet / summer dry areas. It can be used in areas where other annual clovers such as subterranean clover fail to persist due to winter wet.

Characteristics

- Suited to areas with a rainfall of 550 to 600 millimetres per year.
- Optimum soil pH is 5.1 to 7.1.
- Adapted to many soil types, however, deep sandy soils should be avoided.
- Tolerant to water logging and can withstand short periods of being under water.
- Peak production is from October to November in the South Island, winter growth can be achieved in warmer areas of the North Island.
- Highly nutritious fodder, which is suitable for grazing or for hay / silage production.
- Low levels of formononetin (oestrogenic compound which can cause infertility in sheep).
- High levels of hard seed for regeneration.

Establishment

- Autumn sowing is recommended in dryland pastures.
- A sowing rate of three to five kilograms per hectare is recommended when grown in a mixed sward.
- Able to be broadcast onto hill country, especially when pastures are open following a summer / autumn drought.
- The germinating seedling is small, so it requires bare ground for best establishment.
- Seed must be able to set in the first year to ensure re-generation.

Management

- Ongoing persistence relies upon seed-set occurring in the first year. This is achieved by removing stock when flowering begins in late September.
- Once two to four flowers per stem have set and the seed has matured, grazing can take place.
- Grazing should remove any long grass so that the new seedlings can establish.
- Graze continuously after the seed has matured in spring/summer. This will ensure the nutritive value is still high for stock, as well as adding to the balansa clover seed bank.
- Heavy grazing in the autumn will suppress the grass component and promote the establishment and productivity of the balansa clover component in a mixed pasture sward.
- Reserves of hard seed in the soil will ensure regeneration in future years.