Establishing Plantain in Spring in Existing Perennial Ryegrass Pastures in Northern Tasmania

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ABSTRACT

Research has shown advantages of including plantain (Plantago lanceolata L.) in grazed perennial ryegrass (Lolium perenne L.) based dairy pastures. Plantain is typically established in dairy pastures during paddock renovation, and included in a mixture with perennial ryegrass. While perennial ryegrass can persist for years, even decades, plantain plant numbers and productivity decline within a few years of establishment. Maintaining the advantage of plantain requires frequent re-establishment. The current research tested the efficacy of 2 sowing methods (direct-drilling and broadcasting) and 3 sowing rates (2.5, 5.0, and 7.5 kg of seed/ha) for establishing plantain in existing irrigated perennial ryegrass pastures. Research was conducted on 5 dairy farms in Northern Tasmania, Australia. Sowing occurred in mid spring 2017 immediately after paddocks were grazed. Plantain establishment was monitored until early autumn 2018. Paddocks were managed as per normal farm practice resulting in plantain being first grazed ~4 weeks post-sowing, before plants had developed to the recommended minimum 6-leaf stage. Dry weather, timing of first grazing after sowing, and insect burden challenged plantain establishment. However, both direct drilling and broadcasting were shown to successfully establish plantain into existing perennial ryegrass pastures.