

Grass species selection

A sward management plan must be developed to generate a self-sustaining grazing environment for Deer

Ryegrass *Lolium Spp*

This species provides the essential energy for Deer, and responds well to fertiliser regimens. Perennial varieties with varying heading dates are required to ensure continuity of supply throughout the year.

Rooting depth of 60mm

Italian Ryegrass has a productive life of three years and produces 18 Tonnes / Hectare of Dry Matter (DM) Ideal for Silage / Haylage / hay, but Not appropriate for grazing (Too high a sugar content, and short productive life)

Perennial Ryegrass has a productive life of over five years and produces 13-15 Tonnes / Hectare of Dry Matter (DM) Ideal for grazing situations as the lower sugar content that Italian Ryegrass is perfect for keeping Deer well nourished, and increasing live-weight gain.

Timothy (*Phleum pratense*)

A persistent grass that provides valuable forage in a dry year. Grows at lower temperatures than Ryegrass, so provides valuable grazing at the beginning and end of the Season. Ideal for inclusion in a grazing mixture to provides invaluable ground cover and therefore grazing in a cold spring. Lower nutritional value than Ryegrass but invaluable species for drought prone environments

Rooting depth of 75mm

Meadow or Chewing Fescue, *Festuca Spp.*

A deeper-rooted low nutritional value species that helps maintain sward viability and drought tolerance. Perfect to include in a grazing mixture to provide *Bottom* to the grazed area Ideal for inclusion in any grazing mixture as it survives in adverse environments

Rooting depth of 75mm

Creeping Red Fescue, *Festuca rubra*.

This plant provides invaluable *bottom* to any sward. It propagates by the use of underground *rhizomes*, which ensure its drought tolerance and ability to provide grazing in dry weather. Low nutritional value when compared to Ryegrass but continues to grow in dry weather. Grows out from the initial seed in a similar fashion to a spiders web and propagates other clones of it's self as it spreads

Rooting depth of 50mm

Glossary

Sward:

Upper layer of soil covered in grass

Bottom:

When looking down at the grass, no soil should be visible. Therefore a highly productive grazing environment for horses, and one that will survive daily wear and tear.

Rhizome

Creeping underground stem that stores carbohydrate for the plant to use in stressful growing conditions.