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Barley Grass Management Solutions

SPEcnote



The problem

Barley grass has invaded many temperate pastures over the past few seasons, thriving under tougher paddock conditions and setting abundant annual seed reserves.

Management of this annual grass species is difficult.

Early in the season barley grass is often seen as useful feed, but as it easily out-competes other pasture species (especially those newly sown) it can become the main grass present by the end of winter. Unfortunately, barley grass provides little spring feed and will begin to hay off quickly at the start of warmer weather, producing hard, damaging seed heads, usually ending the paddock's usefulness for the season.

Tackling barley grass requires farmers to plan weed control strategies for their whole farm that extend over a 2-3 year period. Unplanned or ad hoc control methods rarely work beyond providing a cosmetic short-term improvement in the pasture.

Barley Grass Characteristic Seed Head



Management techniques

There are a number of different management techniques that can be employed as part of your long-term weed control strategy to tackle barley grass in various situations.

These four techniques can also be used on other annual grass weed problems, although silvergrass (*Vulpia* spp) may require additional chemical options (refer to Nufarm's silvergrass control information for more details).

1. Early break – barley grass has emerged quickly in a paddock about to be sown

Barley grass often emerges quickly on early autumn rains. This can be an advantage when planning to control the weed prior to sowing an improved pasture stand.

- Stimulate quick weed germination by lightly cultivating or harrowing the paddock at the autumn break.
- Spray the emerged barley grass at the two leaf stage with either Roundup PowerMAX® if few broadleaf weeds are present, or Revolver® (paraquat and diquat) if a large amount of capeweed is present.
- Immediately sow suitable pasture seed (short term, high productivity grass varieties) to provide strong competition for any remaining barley grass that is yet to emerge.

2. Barley grass has emerged in an annual grass based pasture

If barley grass has already emerged in an annual pasture paddock that will not be over-sown there are few control options available early in the season.

Key to pasture management in this situation is utilising the young barley grass feed and not overgrazing other pasture species at the same time. It is important not to neglect the paddock, or it will simply get worse!

Plan to control barley grass in spring (refer to Spray topping/hay freezing below) and look at other methods to improve overall pasture production. Improve your pasture species the following season to introduce strong competition.

