

Greener pastures for summer



Steven Finlay and Andrew Landale from Holbrook are impressed with the new summer-active Hummer tall fescue.

Farmers looking for greener pastures through summer are invited to take a leaf out of Andrew Landale's book and sow the new Hummer tall fescue.

The new summer active perennial pasture provides the right mix of quality and quantity of feed, says Mr Landale, farming at Holbrook in the Riverina with his wife and her parents, Susie and Steven Finlay.

As well as running a beef operation producing black baldy steers to 550 kg, Mr Landale also grows pasture seed.

He sowed Hummer in 2013 to produce seed in 2014 and 2015, building up stock for the release of the new variety this year by AusWest Seeds.

Mr Landale generally finishes harvesting his Hummer seed in early summer. He then bales the straw and opens the paddock up to grazing.

Although classed as a summer active fescue, he finds Hummer continues to produce dry matter through winter as well.

"Starting from early spring, it really shows its true potential," he said.

"With the right moisture, huge amounts of dry matter are achievable right through spring, summer and autumn."

Mr Landale believes the palatability of the Hummer tall fescue is better than previous varieties.

"The feed quality of this fescue has come a long way, to the point where its palatability is second to none," he said.

“The cattle seem to take very little time to adjust to it.”

Mr Landale suggested graziers consider adding a legume in the pasture for even higher weight gains.

“As a professional pasture seed grower, I am very impressed with Hummer fescue for both quality and quantity,” he said.

Frank McRae, Product Development Manager for AusWest Seeds, said Hummer was a continental fescue variety, ideal for hot summer environments with moisture, such as irrigated dairy pastures, sheep and beef operations.

He said it was designed to replace Jesup tall fescue and offered a superior quality of feed for longer, making it easier to manage in situations when the pasture stand grows beyond its optimal grazing height.

“Hummer was selected for its high tiller density, persistence, high yields and fine, soft leaves,” Mr McRae said.

“The softness of the leaves means it can still be grazed if it grows beyond optimal grazing height, so the feed isn’t wasted.”

However, farmers will still need to be vigilant in their grazing management, given the pasture produces high yields over summer.

“It is important to be aware that under a rotational grazing system in summer, Hummer will grow back a lot faster than ryegrass,” he said.

In fact, he suggested grazing with both sheep and cattle would help improve grazing management and utilisation.

Hummer can be sown with sub clover, white clover or other legumes to improve animal nutrition and provide nitrogen to the fescue for improved performance and persistence.

It contains a novel MaxP® endophyte to help it handle pest attacks and moisture stress, another advantage over older tall fescue cultivars.

“Hummer is deep rooted and very persistent, even under quite difficult conditions,” he said.

Mr McRae said Hummer would suit a number of regions across New South Wales, including the New England, high rainfall coastal areas and higher rainfall areas of the Central Tablelands and Southern Tablelands.

“Hummer is also a good alternative to ryegrass for farmers looking for green pastures in hot summer environments, where there is irrigation,” he said.

“It can handle the heat a lot better than ryegrass, which tends to shut down at high temperatures.”

For more information on Hummer tall fescue with MaxP® endophyte contact your local seed distributor.