

## **Autumn Reseeding has Huge Benefits for Beef Farms**

**By Anthony O'Connor, Teagasc Adviser, Athenry**

There's nothing like new grass. Replacing an old unproductive permanent pasture with a Perennial Ryegrass/Clover sward must be seen as a long term investment to increase grassland productivity and output.

Perennial Ryegrass/Clover swards:

- Give high yields of grass Dry Matter throughout the year
- Provide more grass in the scarce periods of early spring and late autumn
- Are 25% more responsive to Nitrogen compared to old permanent pasture
- Support higher stocking rates
- Support higher animal performance and liveweight gain
- Reduces chemical Nitrogen usage and cuts fertiliser costs

A productive clover sward is able to fix up to 150kg of N per ha per year (120 units per acre). This is N available to grass plants. However, reseeding comes at a cost, up to €320/acre depending on lime, fertiliser required and the amount of work carried out by your contractor etc. Every effort is needed to ensure that any reseeding is successful and that the investment is worthwhile. Management practices that need to be considered when reseeding are as follows;

- **Timing** - As early as possible (July/early August). After this, weather conditions suitable for seed germination deteriorate. Reseeding must be completed by 15th September as no chemical fertiliser can be applied after this date.
- **Preparation** - Graze out area before starting any reseeding. Take a soil sample and have it analysed. The old sward should be burned off using Glyphosate (Roundup) 10-14 days prior to

cultivation to allow enough time for the active ingredient of the spray to be carried throughout the plant to ensure adequate kill. Take into account the additional time needed for reseeding when doing this.

- **Soil Fertility** - Reseeded pastures will not perform to their potential if soil fertility is not corrected. New seedlings are particularly susceptible to a lack of lime and Phosphorus. The exact quantities of lime and fertilisers required can be determined from a soil test. If there is a NMP, AEOS plan, REPS 4 plan or Fertiliser Plan for the farm, then follow the recommendations of plan. Keep an eye on the P limit for the farm. The best time to apply lime/fertiliser is after ploughing. These nutrients can then be tilled into the seedbed.
- **Seed** - Grass seed is sold in seed mixture. Choose a seed mixture to suit your needs. All varieties of seed in mixture should be on the Department of Agriculture Approved Varieties 2012 list. There should be two varieties of late heading Perennial Ryegrass seed and two varieties of White Clover in the seed mixture. For a cattle farm, choose clover with a medium leaf along with a large leaf. The smaller leaf varieties are more persistent but the larger leaf varieties have a higher yield. Modern varieties of White Clover are tolerant of high fertiliser levels but will not stand up to intensive cutting.
- **Sowing** - This can be done by ploughing or minimum cultivation, followed by power harrowing. The seedbed needs to be fine, free of trash, stones etc. Use a seed box or fertiliser spreader to sow the seed. Direct drilling tends to bury the clover seed too deep. Sow one bag of seed mixture/acre. Roll the entire reseeded area with a ring roller.