

Reseeding at Higher Stocking Rates

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For farmers who are operating at higher stocking rates, whether that is drystock or dairy, the principles of reseedling are the same, namely;

- Have the soil tested before so you can accurately meet the young plant's requirements and ensure a rapid germination.
- Establish a fine firm seedbed, with good soil to seed contact.
- Only select varieties that are on the Department of Agriculture's approved list as these have been tested under Irish conditions.
- Order grass seed in good time as sowing windows can be narrow.

The main difference for farmers at higher stocking rates is in selecting grass varieties. Farmers at lower stocking rates will likely be including 2kgs of white clover in a 12kg bag of grass seed (one bag/acre). Once established, the clover should be able to meet the grass requirements for Nitrogen from May/June onwards. At higher stocking rates, clover will not be able to consistently provide enough Nitrogen and bag Nitrogen will have to be used after each grazing. Thus, the rate of clover in the grass seed mixture will drop to 0.5kg in the mix. The main reason for including it at all is that it helps the palatability of the sward especially mid-season.

Extremely important in your variety selection is matching this to the soil type. If you have dry free draining soils, then all options are on the table. However, if the soil has poorer drainage or is heavy/peaty in nature, tetraploids should be avoided as these tend to produce more open swards, hence will be more easily damaged. Indeed there are specific seed mixtures available for difficult soils which give dense swards and have deeper rooting systems.

Another important factor to consider is what the pasture will be used for. If the field is only for grazing, then tetraploids should represent about one third of the mixture as they tend to have better growth at the shoulders of the year and better mid-season palatability. Two thirds of the mixture should be diploids as these have better persistence and tend to produce denser swards. If the sward is for silage, the grass seed mixture should be based on diploids that have a high ground cover score, especially if the sward is for a two cut system.