

# **Natural regeneration, cost minimum \$300, reseeding cost minimum \$145**

*By Ray Candy*

There is considerable conjecture surrounding the perceived benefit of shutting up annual ryegrass paddocks for re-seeding and the cost saving generated by not having to sow seed the following year.

I have described below some key issues that need to be considered in this discussion.

Where a paddock is shut up for reseeding, the following points need to be taken into consideration:

- The cost of dry matter lost to produce a seed crop equals lost income
- Potential loss of seed because of false break
- Higher risk of fungal and insect damage due to additional litter carried over
- Potential for increased weed infestation
- Loss of production in the following year from immature and cross pollinated seed. This could be significant

Versus, the paddock being grazed after taking for silage:

- Income generated from dry matter produced after silage/hay
- A cleaner paddock for the sowing of seed
- The cost of seed for sowing the following autumn
- The cost of sowing (partly offset by topdressing)

To look at each of these scenarios, we have detailed below some costings.

## **Self sown paddock:**

There could be up to 3,000 kgs/DM/ha sacrificed by closing up a paddock for seed. The cost of replacing this would be \$150.00 per tonne, which equates to \$450 per hectare.

## **Seeded paddock:**

Below is a direct comparison with the self sown option:

- 1; Wheat belt areas: annual ryegrass sown at 10 kgs/ha @\$5.00 per kg plus sowing costs, the total establishment cost would be \$75 per hectare. This compares to a cost of \$450 per hectare just to cover the lost production.
- 2; In high rainfall areas the cost scenario would be 20 kgs/ha seed sown, plus sowing costs totalling \$125 per hectare, a gain of \$325 per hectare.

## **Conclusion:**

The above comparisons show a significantly lower cost to re sow a paddock in new seed compared to lost production incurred where saving it for seed.

Importantly, not only is there a potential saving in seeding the paddock, but the risk factors associated with the self sown option, i.e., closing the paddock for seed, are considerable and may include:

- potential loss of seed due to a false break
- increased risk of plant loss due to fungal and insects

- lower production from cross pollinated seed

Fertiliser requirements are considered to be the same for both areas.

Seed is an investment in the future profitability of a farming operation and whilst it may be expensive, there is considerable evidence to show that taking shortcuts has a negative contribution to the bottom line.

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