

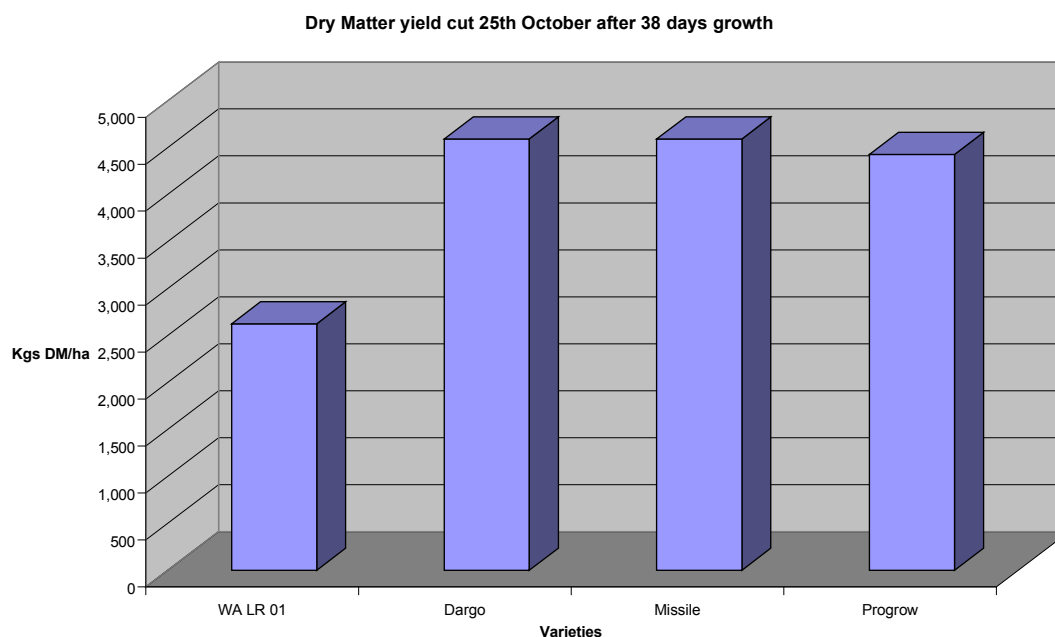
## WHEN IS A RYEGRASS SEED NOT A SEED!!

A recent evaluation conducted by Ray Candy over a six week period of pasture paddocks that were set up for seed set has sent alarm bells ringing with a number of industry people.

The earlier consideration that the practise of shutting paddocks up for seed set after taking them for silage or hay as a less expensive method of getting a pasture the following year is false economy given what we have found across all the areas surveyed says Ray.

In almost all areas the highest proportion of seeds checked had no embryo or kernel development sufficient to establish a reasonable pasture for dairy production or conversely a very small embryo that would indicate limited seedling vigour. On some areas where there was heavier soil there was a limited amount of seed that would germinate however it was much less than required to establish a decent pasture says Ray.

Last year at the Irwin Hunter & Co Waroona trial site we tested a line of WA produced seed, (coded WALR01), that had been purchased by a farmer whom expressed concern about the quality of seed. The silage cut result shown in the graph below confirmed the farmers concern, and this result is reflective of other farmer experiences.



The locally harvested seed, (plot WALR01), only yielded **57%** of the Dargo and Missile plots, and **59%** of the Progrow plot.

The high % of Wimmera in the line WALR01 generated very early flowering in this line, (123 days after sowing compared to Dargo at 139 days), indicating the sown variety would have set minimal seed allowing the lower yielding Wimmera to make up the bulk of the progeny.

For example on this cut the yield advantage to Dargo compared to WALR01 was 1,968 kgs of DM/ha. Where dry matter is valued at \$150.00 per tonne this equates to an extra \$295.00 value to the Dargo. Seed cost was only \$62.50 per ha more, an advantage to Dargo of \$232.50.

In summary the climate in Western Australia is not conducive to achieving a seed set with a high percentage of viable seed on Italian ryegrasses due to the lack of moisture at the critical stage of seed maturity.

This coupled with our hot conditions are causing plants to abort seed early therefore severely limiting any chance of getting viable seed set in quantities that will achieve a level of plant population sufficient to produce good pasture.

If there is viable seed, it will most likely be Wimmera given the short growing season available to us.

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