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New Tetila ryegrass helps to increase herd numbers

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Paul's father always concentrated on pasture production and strip grazed the dairy herd, looking to utilize as much pasture growth as possible. When Paul took over 10 years ago, he was milking 120 Holstein Friesian cows and today, after building a 15 aside swing over dairy, is milking 165 cows at their peak.

Next year he is hoping to increase the dairy herd to 180 cows.

"For the last 8 years Paul has concentrated on direct seeding annual ryegrasses which appear to suit the Margaret River area. Four years ago he started to concentrate on New Tetila, a Tetraploid annual ryegrass which was direct drilled over half the grazing area in the autumn.



"Our silage and hay are harvested in October and November and it is used to feed the dairy herd during the dry summer months. Then, in April as the season breaks and when all the dry feed has been fed off, I direct drill all the paddocks which we plan to harvest for silage."

"I sow New Tetila annual ryegrass at 20 to 25 kg / ha and Sub Clover at 2.5 kg / ha. At the same time we apply generous

amounts of a fertiliser mixture that has been recommended after soil testing.

"Depending on when the break occurs, we allow 4 to 6 weeks for the pasture to establish and depending on growth rates we apply up to three applications of a nitrogen fertiliser.

"By mid-May these pastures have reached the three leaf stage and from then on I aim to have a grazing rotation which varies from 30 to 40 days. By using the New Tetila, which was only released two years ago, I'm confident that with the strategic use of nitrogen based fertilisers I will be able to increase the herd numbers as planned," Paul said.

After applying a generous spring dressing of fertiliser the paddocks are shut up, by which time the New Tetila ryegrass is just coming into flower.

One of the things Paul likes about New Tetila is its extra flag, it is also not a stalky plant and it has big, broad, long leaves which produce top quality silage. During the summer months it has been the custom for Paul to feed the dairy herd grain during milking but he is hoping that as the quality and quantity of his silage improves he will be able to reduce the amount of grain used, with the resultant reduction in costs.

"I feel that the lower cost of quality grass silage is preferable to any other supplementary feed while its high nutrition easily maintains the dairy herd during the dry summer months," Paul concluded.