

Irwin Hunter & Co.

Western Australia's Leading Seed Distributor

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Western Annual Ryegrass Mix provides high quality hay.

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"It is imperative that the pasture we grow for the horses spelled here, especially for the development of foals and yearlings, is maintained at the highest possible quality. With the assistance of modern high producing pasture seed, this is becoming much easier to achieve."

Phil Ibbotson who manages the 64 ha Wendowie Agistment Stud, situated by the Serpentine River, made this comment after pointing out that horses are very selective grazers and if left to their own devices, will pick out the more palatable pasture species and this can lead to 'mongrel' weeds such as barley grass and Cape weed taking over the whole paddock.

"Our paddocks average 6 hectares and as well we have smaller individual post and rail yards which contain Kikuyu pasture and these are irrigated regularly.

"We have to keep renewing the pastures in our paddocks to ensure that the weeds don't take over and that we retain quality feed. As well we make our own meadow hay to feed out during the summer," Phil said. He relies on SJ Rural Supplies at Mundijong who with the help of agronomists at Irwin Hunter & Co. advise him on the pasture types he should be using.



One 5 ha paddock had reached the stage where the pasture had deteriorated to the point where it was no longer of any value to horses. "I scarified the paddock and kept working it until we had controlled about three germinations of weeds, then we sowed the paddock with Western Annual Ryegrass Mix (which includes Dargo, Progrow, Surrey), and under seeded with Paradana Balansa and a subterranean clover at a total of 15 kg / ha in early June, with a generous application of 3:1 super potash mixture.

After sowing the germination was excellent, but we had to spray another germination of Cape weed, which damaged the clovers slightly. But fortunately they all recovered and the Cape weed was knocked right out," he said.

Phil explained that after ample rain the early pasture growth was slow, but by September it was really taking off. In the early stages the clover looked as though it would dominate the ryegrass, then in early October, the ryegrass growth was fantastic.

"When I cut it, the ryegrass was about a metre high and I couldn't believe how much it had grown during that period. As a result the clovers were suppressed. The 23 tonnes of hay we cut off this 5 ha paddock contained a good balance of clover and ryegrass and this was good high protein, valuable hay for the horses.

"From my point of view this high quality hay is just what we require for the horses during the summer months. This paddock has proved to be so successful that I aim to repeat this pasture management in other 5 ha paddocks at Wendowie in future years.

At the same time Phil worked up another 5 ha paddock several times to control the weeds and when he had reached a good clean seedbed in early June, sowed Sceptre Lucerne at 15 kg / ha with the same amount of super/potash mixture.

In this paddock the early germination was quite strong, but due to water logging the Lucerne didn't perform as well as he wanted, but it showed Phil that if he plants his Lucerne into better drained soil it will provide highly nutritious grazing for the horses and also good Lucerne hay if the right conditions prevail.