

WEED OF THE season

Browntop

Agrostis capillaris is all too familiar to many farmers, but is still often underestimated when it comes to pasture renewal.

This rhizomatous grass is common in NZ pastures, where its lack of feed quality and production at critical times coupled with an aggressive reproductive habit reduces farm production e.g. in a Southland trial lambs weaned onto browntop pasture grew at 84g/day compared with 160g/day on ryegrass/white clover pasture.

Browntop becomes reproductive very early in summer producing large amounts of seed. Research has shown that some soils have 150,000 seeds/m²!

Seeds and dormant rhizomes need to be eliminated to prevent rapid reinvasion.

In winter and early spring browntop comprises dead material and dense thatch, which suppresses clover in spring.

Effective control of this species is achieved only through repeat **Roundup®** applications, targeting periods of active growth (spring and autumn) interspersed with a fallow or crop to allow remaining seeds to germinate and dormant rhizomes to activate. Recommended rates are 4L/ha **Roundup TRANSORB®** when plants have 5-10cm of fresh new growth, for the first application. Inadequate rates for the first application will only suppress the plant, not kill it.

Roundup topping in spring may also be used prior to an autumn renewal programme to limit seed production in summer.

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