

Red Meat Development Programme

The why and how of chicory as an alternative forage crop



Chicory is a leafy high yielding, high protein perennial forage that can be grown as a pure stand or as a key ingredient in a grass or grass/clover sward. An excellent source of home grown forage, chicory extends the grazing season and is good for finishing lambs.



Typical analysis of pure chicory

Dry Matter	Crude Protein	Digestibility	Ash	ME
8%	25.4%	66.1%	15.2%	10.4%

Benefits of Growing Perennial Chicory

- Good animal performance: lamb growth rates of 250-300g/day, similar to legumes but better than perennial rye grass only.
- Good yield and quality: from 12-15tDM/ha/annum should support 50 lambs/ha for around 35 days.
- High mineral content: including zinc, potassium and copper.
- Tolerant of drought, acid soils and major pests.
- Reduces the impact of internal parasites.
- Does not cause bloat.
- Provides a beneficial break in rotation.
- Good for soil structure.

Other Considerations

Be aware that chicory does not suit all systems; keep the following in mind:

- It requires high levels of grazing management: best suited to rotational or strip grazing.
- Pure stands do not ensile well.
- It requires nitrogen from manures, fertiliser or clover to maximise growth potential.
- It needs careful grazing in the winter to prevent damage to the growing point (the crown) especially when wet.

Growing and Establishing Chicory

1. Select a perennial forage chicory for yield and quality.
2. Pick a well drained field.
3. Sample soil and manage to achieve pH 6 and P and K indices of 2.
4. Control broad-leaved weeds before sowing.
5. Sow pure stand or with clover May - end June, mixed swards can be sown to mid August.
6. Seed rates: pure stand 1.6-2.4kg/acre, mixtures- 0.2-0.8kg/ acre plus grass and clover seeds.
7. Seed can be drilled, broadcast or direct drilled into a firm seed bed to a maximum depth of 10mm.
8. Slug pellets may improve establishment.
9. In a pure stand N, P and K fertiliser requirements are similar to grass sowing with a medium leaf white clover 5kg/ha (2kg/acre) will provide N.

Management

1. Commence grazing at least 8 weeks after establishment, to prevent uprooting. Ensure it does not get too mature to prevent bolting and reduced palatability.
2. Strip or rotationally graze with back fence on 3-6 week rotation: maintain stands below 10cm high in spring (approx 3 week intervals) and below 15cm (5 week intervals) in summer and autumn.
3. Graze to 5cm before winter and then rest to protect the crown.

The Red Meat Development Programme is delivered by Hybu Cig Cymru (HCC) on behalf of Farming Connect.

Further information on subsidised on-farm support and other related farm management options is available from the Red Meat Development Programme on 01970 625050 or visit www.hccmpw.org.uk