

94/T01



Producer Research Support

Coated seed works in direct drilled forage rape

AMM Farm Advance Group



This Producer Research Support project was conducted because it was thought that improved direct drilling techniques, the introduction of seed coating and more effective insecticides may overcome many of the past failures.

Key points

- In regions not suitable for cultivation, fodder rape can be successfully established using coated seed technology.
- There appears to be no real advantage in spraying a paddock with insecticide and using seed coating technology.
- If conditions are good and the paddock can be cultivated for fodder rape establishment the result will be better than direct drilling.

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The project

Between 8,000 and 10,000 hectares of fodder rape is grown each year in Tasmania. Most is sown into conventionally prepared seedbeds with the crop grazed in autumn.

With the emphasis on lamb carcase weight increasing, the growing of fodder crops is becoming more important. However, the need for conventional seedbeds restricts the use of rape because of cost, suitable soil types and timeliness.

Direct drilling of fodder crops has been trialed in Tasmania with limited success. Inadequate soil seed contact and poor pest control are blamed for most crop failures.

This project was conducted because it was thought that improved direct drilling techniques, the introduction of seed coating and more effective insecticides may overcome many of the past failures.

An earlier Producer Research Support project had established that the use of synthetic pyrethroids reduces the population of many damaging insect pests (see 93/T02) while seed coating technology increases protection at emergence.

Objective

Determine whether new technology (equipment, insecticides and seed coating) will result in the successful direct drilling of fodder rape under Tasmanian conditions.

What was done

There were four sites established each year comprising four treatments. The knockdown herbicide used was Monsanto's Roundup CT. The fodder rape sown was Wrightson Seeds' variety Bonar.

What happened?

The coated seed treatments produced significantly more dry matter. Mr Barrett said this was consistent with the increased plant establishment achieved using coated seed.

Over the last two years it was clearly shown that the use of coated fodder seed in a direct drill crop significantly increased plant establishment and dry matter production.

Increases of 30–150% were recorded over the trial.

Producer Research Support

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Contact Stephen Feighan - MLA Project Manager, Producer Delivery and Adoption.
Tel (02) 9463 9245 or
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He said there appeared to be no real advantage in spraying a paddock with insecticide and using seed coating technology.

"It is best to use the seed coating treatment as this is far more economical and also far more convenient," he said.

Using coated fodder seed rape costs about \$4–6/hectare (seed coating only) completed with an insecticide that costs about \$12/ha plus application costs.

Coated seed works in direct drilled forage rape.

Discussion

The use of insecticide coated seed when direct drilling fodder rape crops will significantly increase plant establishment and dry matter produced.

There was, however, no real advantage in using both the treated seed and an insecticide when direct drilling fodder rape.

Trial consultant Alan Barrett said it was far more cost effective and convenient to use coated seed.

He said there was no real advantage in using coated seed or insecticide when establishing fodder rape on conventionally prepared seedbeds. But it should be noted that the summer of the trial in Tasmania was wet and considered ideal for fodder crop growth.

Mr Barrett said in a dry summer it was thought these techniques would assist in improving plant establishment and dry matter production when plant growth was not vigorous.

"If conditions are good and the paddock can be cultivated for fodder rape establishment it would have to be concluded that better crops would be established more reliably than direct drilling."

"However there are many regions throughout the Tasmanian pastoral region that are not suited to cultivation. In these cases fodder rape can be established successfully by direct drilling and coated seed should be used."