

FODDER BEET PREFERRED VARIETIES



BLAZE

Blaze is a new variety with the potential to produce excellent dry matter yields with very clean bright red roots. Blaze is a medium dry matter variety which enables the roots to be fed whole or chopped. **Low dirt contamination** ensures high intakes with no scouring.

ROBBOS (Previously called Maestro)

Robbos is a new introduction. It had the **highest dry matter yield** in our trials and with a clean yellow root and medium dry matter content makes it an ideal choice for both dairy and beef production.

RIBONDO

This is a new Rhizomania resistant variety, ideally suited for growing in areas that may be affected by this disease.



Strip Grazing



Although most fodder beet crops are lifted (so that the roots can be clamped ready for feeding during the winter) this is not the only option. A number of livestock farmers have been strip grazing their crops which has proved to be a very cost effective option.

The photograph shows a crop of Robbos being strip grazed in January 2009.

FODDER BEET HUSBANDRY INFORMATION

Soil Type/Site Selection

The crop can thrive on a wide range of soils but a light to medium, free draining field is ideal. A soil pH of 7 is the target and good accessibility is vital for heavy harvesting machinery.

Seedbed and Sowing Methods

Aim for a firm, fine tilth with pre-Christmas ploughing. Keep moisture loss to the minimum in the spring. Monogerm seeds have eliminated the need for labour intensive singling. However, allow for some field losses if seedbed conditions are poor. As a general guide soil temperatures need to be at least 5°C before sowing. Early April is a typical drilling date in the South. Delayed drilling can lead to yield losses. Ensure that the seed is drilled to a depth of 2.5/3.0 cm - use the deeper figure for dry seedbeds. A precision drill is essential.

Varieties

Always choose a variety to suit your harvesting method.

Fertiliser

This is a demanding crop in terms of nutrients. All the fertiliser except the nitrogen is best applied in the autumn. The nitrogen can be applied immediately after drilling. The use of slurry/FYM will be beneficial, as is the application of sodium on appropriate soil types. Trace elements (especially manganese and boron) are important with fodder beet.

Weeds, Diseases & Pest Control

Some farmers may be prepared to undertake inter-row cultivation but most now prefer to rely on herbicides to control weeds. It is vitally important to control weeds as their presence can severely reduce yields. Weed beets are very undesirable and every effort must be made to eliminate them.

Our seed is treated with both fungicide and insecticidal compounds to provide protection during the establishment phase. The crop can be attacked by several pests including slugs and wireworms, while aphids transmit virus yellows.

Harvesting

Although the crop continues to put on yield into the autumn this has to be balanced against the potential problems associated with a late harvest. Some farmers have their own lifting equipment while others will bring in a contractor. Machines can be divided into 'leaf' or 'root lifters' - whichever is used the tops must be removed down to the base of the leaf petioles. Keep soil contamination to the minimum.

Root Storage

A pre-cleaner is recommended to remove soil contamination. Clamps should be checked regularly for signs of any hot spots. The high DM varieties tend to store better on a long-term basis and are less prone to damage.

Feeding

Fodder beet may be fed chopped or whole. Chopped beet should provide a better LWG in beef animals.

Feeding the roots at ground level can reduce the risk of choking. The roots have a high energy but low protein content and make a good substitute for grain in rations for dairy cows, beef animals, sheep, pigs and deer. Crops have also been strip grazed in situ very successfully.

