AGPRO DIRECT

TECH SHEET:

Forestry Establishment

Planting trees has now become a very topical subject amongst farmers and some investors for a variety of reasons, and this has resulted in a recent surge in enquiry about the appropriate processes that need to be followed to get a crop established successfully.

The advantages of forestry are well documented, such as offsetting carbon output from ruminant stock, erosion control and spreading risk. Radiata based forestry has also now become a very profitable enterprise, thanks to strong demand for wood products from China and an established emissions trading scheme.

Essentially plantation forestry establishment in New Zealand can be categorised into 4 broad areas, those being:

1. **Radiata Pine.** By far the largest crop tree that is currently being planted by volume and area.
2. **Manuka.** A relatively recent surge in interest in manuka establishment due primarily to honey production but manuka also qualifies for carbon sequestration.
3. **Riparian planting.** There is now without doubt a greater emphasis on improving water quality in New Zealand's lakes and rivers, and riparian planting is one sure way of achieving this.
4. **Alternative crop species being planted.** In particular Eucalypt and Redwood species.

For the sake of simplicity, this tech sheet will focus on Radiata establishment.

There are many factors to consider when deciding what area, and how much area, should be planted and some examples would be as follows:

- Current productivity of the proposed site; does forestry stack up financially versus other forms of land use?
- Distance from a main road and then distance from either a port or mill capable of taking raw logs.
- Required site preparation prior to planting.
- Potential threats from weed and pest post plant.

To further investigate the points made above plus many others, engaging a professional forestry advisor would in nearly all cases be a very wise decision. These advisors are also best placed to apply for any government based grants that may be available and in most cases can also manage / advise on carbon credits that arise from new plantings. They can also arrange tree stocks, planting contractors and aerial applicators.

Once the decision has been made to plant and the site has been selected, it is then recommended to allow plenty of time to plan for site preparation, especially if there is established brushweeds such as gorse and broom that require attention. Planning a year in advance prior to planting allows trees and planting contractors to be booked in, any fencing and tracking work to be completed, and any brushweeds that need to be controlled can be sprayed.

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SUGGESTED AGPRO SPRAY PROGRAMME

A lot of forestry is established on land that is infested with brushweeds, and a simple timeline to go from gorse or blackberry (for example) to trees is as follows:

1. Spray gorse with Meturon at label brushweed rates in the spring (October or November) prior to planting.
2. Either mechanically remove the brushweed by crushing, or by fire, in the autumn prior to planting.
3. Plant in the winter.
4. Release with Valzine 500 at 16-18L/ha applied aerially in the spring after planting. Additives can be added to Valzine to increase the knockdown of Valzine if brushweed germination is prolific.
5. Possibly release again in the spring a year later if brushweeds are problematic, applying 5L/ha Cloralid, 500ml/ha Brushkiller and 500ml/ha Organosilicone also applied aerially.

For those sites that are predominantly ex pasture sites and have minimal or no brushweed issues, then the process tends to be much more simplistic. A typical strategy would be as follows:

1. Still allow 12 months prior to planting to get tree stock and contractors confirmed.
2. Graze the site comprehensively in the weeks prior to planting using mature cattle.
3. Plant in the winter.
4. Spot release (ground based contractor) using Valzine 500 in the spring immediately after planting.
5. Be vigilant in terms of pest control, goats in particular, in the 18 months after planting.

The choice of post plant release product can be influenced by numerous factors, such as grass type; if kikuyu or paspalum grasses are present then a Terbuthylazine and Haloxyfop combination would be more appropriate. For very steep or remote sites, then releasing using Valzine granules may be more practical from a contractors perspective. Other external factors such as soil type (sandy, light soils need a different response), timing and local environment also need consideration. For drought prone areas, best results are obtained post plant if the crop tree is not moisture stressed (so releasing early in the spring can be wise).

There really is "no one size fits all" when deciding what is the best chemical product to use either pre plant or post plant. At Agpro, we are well placed to provide technical advice around the spraying component of forestry establishment based on many years experience.

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