



**TECH SHEET:**

# Plantain Management

**Well-managed plantain generally has a lower dry matter content than ryegrass pasture and contains less fibre. The metabolisable energy (ME) content is similar, although plantain may remain better quality than ryegrass during hot, dry summers.**

As plantain leaves age over 2-3 years, they become more fibrous, less digestible, and the quality of the crop declines regardless of stem content. This is one of the reasons why relatively frequent grazing (at 25 cm height) is recommended.

Plantain also has greater mineral content of the following (P, K, S, Ca, Mg, Na, Zn, Cu, B and Co) than ryegrass pasture.

The milk solids response to plantain appears to depend on the quality of the pasture diet. If pasture quality consistently drops away in summer, then including plantain can increase per cow milk solids production.

At this stage there has not been any work done on the profitability of including plantain in a farm system, or what is the optimal proportion of the farm to have in plantain. Trial work and research is underway.

There has been some talk that dairy cows won't eat plantain at certain times of the year and, unfortunately, it is not known what may cause this. DairyNZ in the Waikato did three years of research work and found cows have never refused to eat plantain, however there have been times when it takes them longer to graze the feed available to the desired result.



- Plantain is an herb with a fibrous, coarse root system that produces 10-19 t DM/ha/year.
- Plantain tends to be more persistent than chicory, often producing the yields above for 2-3 years.
- Plantain should be grazed at 25-30 cm height.
- To maximise yield and persistence avoid overgrazing and treading damage on wet soil.
- Plantain is highly responsive to nitrogen fertiliser

Plantain should be first grazed no earlier than the six leaf stage (i.e. the plants have six fully grown leaves). This is normally 7-8 weeks after spring-sowing. This ensures that plants have well-developed root systems to improve survival.

Plantain needs to be planted into soils with an average temperature of between 20-12 degrees.

**AGPRO HORTICULTURE**  
**Freephone 0508 536 536**  
*for technical assistance*

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**SUGGESTED SPRAY PROGRAMME**

The AGPRO programme below aims to give a guide on how to get the best “keep the crop clean” from weed control, taking care of pest issues, and making sure you get the best out of your crop.

Product	Application timing	Purpose	Rate/ha	Comments
<b>AGPRO Glyphosate 510</b>	Sprayout early prior to planting	Removes unwanted weeds	3-5L/ha	Add Wilt 700 or another suitable surfactant at label rates
<b>AGPRO Dicamba</b>	Plantain needs to be 6 months old or 4-6 leaf stage	Removes a range of hard to kill broadleaf weeds	250-600ml/ha	Ensure crop is not stressed
<b>Grasidim</b>	After grass weeds emerge	Selective grass weed control	170ml-2L/ha	Add AGPRO Crop Oil to this application

**Notes:**

Some farmers have also suggested that grazing every 21-24 days in late February to mid-March may reduce the caterpillar population and therefore the need for spraying.

All products mentioned above are registered under the ACVM Act 1997.



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