

Story from the farm: Growing forage fast with FeedEx sorghum

Contributor: Mark Palmer, Stephen Pasture Seeds, Northern Victoria



FeedEx sorghum is a highly productive and efficient summer forage option for northern Victoria.

Graziers and dairy farmers looking for highly productive and efficient summer forage are being advised to consider a hybrid forage sorghum crop this season.

That's been Stuart Rowsell's approach at his 50 hectare irrigated sheep and fodder operation near Gunbower for the past five years.

Mr Rowsell has found FeedEx to be an impressive summer forage option for grazing and additional silage production.

FeedEx is a hybrid sorghum based on sorghum x sudan grass genetics with very strong early vigour and fast regrowth.

Mr Rowsell said his sheep perform exceptionally well when grazing on FeedEx, achieving a high level of feed utilisation.

"The quick recovery of FeedEx from grazing is also very impressive and allows us to have an average of four grazing periods per season," he said.

"We have found that if we can get the crop sown by early November, we're able to graze it as soon as mid-December."



He added that applying nitrogen after each grazing helped make the most of the growth potential of FeedEx.

Mark Palmer from Stephen Pasture Seeds said yields from FeedEx could be expected to be as high as 16 t DM/ha for the summer, with up to five grazing periods, if the crop was sown early and managed correctly.

He said sowing could start when soil temperatures reached 16°C.

“FeedEx offers excellent digestibility at a crop height of 750 mm to 1200 mm, with more than 64% of the dry matter digestible and a crude protein of 17.4%,” he said.

Mr Palmer said another major benefit of growing a high quality forage sorghum like FeedEx was its high water use efficiency compared with other fodder crops.

“Forage sorghum is very efficient with water, so you can grow more dry matter per megalitre of water than you can with lucerne, millet or perennial grasses,” he said.

At Gunbower, Mr Rowsell has found he can grow more feed with FeedEx sorghum than millet, with less water.

“The water use efficiency of forage sorghum is very appealing,” Mr Rowsell said.

“With FeedEx, we have the potential to grow 1.5 times more feed than millet, while using three quarters of the water.”

FeedEx can be grown in dryland situations or with irrigation. While water use depends on soil type and watering frequency, Mr Palmer said he would generally expect forage sorghum to produce 4-6 t DM/ha/meg.

“If you’re looking for a forage crop to maximise productivity, FeedEx sorghum is your best bet,” Mr Palmer said.

FeedEx is available with KickStart seed treatment to protect seeds from insect attack and help the establishing crop overcome environmental stress.

For more information about growing FeedEx this season contact your local advisor or Stephen Pasture Seeds on 03 5335 8055.