

Brassica Options



Coleseed production

Introduction

Brassica crops are a very useful component of a forage feed programme on farms. Brassicas provide a source of high quality feed and can be especially useful as this feed can be available when feed demand exceeds pasture supply. Common uses of brassicas are as a source of feed during the winter period, as a finishing feed for lambs particularly and as a feed source during periods of soil moisture deficit.

Most crops are sown for use during the winter months, although Rape is often used as a specialist lamb fattening crop in areas where summer dry can be a problem.

Turnips can be used to provide a feed source during dry summer periods.

Brassica crops are typically easy to manage, high yielding and can be used as part of a pasture renovation programme.

Brassicas do have some limitations as a feed source due to their chemical composition.

Careful management will ensure that the full benefit of a brassica crop is captured and the potential downsides are avoided.

Brassica Options

The choice of forage crops which can be grown on a particular site is very wide and the ultimate choice depends on many factors. These include:

- Soil type, fertility, drainage, crop history
- End use of crop, method of utilisation
- Time of year for sowing and consumption
- Class of stock

Crop Type	Use	Days to grazing	ME	Average Yield
Rape	Specialist summer feed Winter feed crop	70-110	12.8	4000-7000kgDM/ha 5000-8000kgDM/ha
Turnips *	Autumn/Winter feed crop	80-120	13.4	6000-8000kgDM/ha
Kale	Winter feed Can be grazed in summer/autumn	150-220	12.8	9000-12000kgDM/ha
Swedes	Winter feed although lambs can eat the tops in late summer/autumn.	170-250	13.6	10000-11000kgDM/ha
Pasja/Hunter	Specialist summer feed	42-70	13.6	8000kgDM/ha

- * Turnips have the potential to taint milk and should therefore make up no more than one third of a cow's diet based on 3t grazings.

There are now a range of varieties for each class of Brassica that have resistance to a number of pests and diseases, improved yield potentials and improved quality leading to improved animal performance.