



Medics

Technical Note F23

Management level	★★★★
Yield	★★
Quality	★★★★★
Water use efficiency	★★
Reliability	★★★★
Versatility	★★

Where ★★★★★ is the highest rating.

Varieties

Burr medic (*Medicago polymorpha*) is naturalised and Barrel (*M. trunculata* cv. caliph and sephi) and snail (*M. scutellata* cv. sava) medics are often planted. Medics distinguished from clovers by yellow flowers.

Annual legumes from Mediterranean areas, suited to wet winters and dry summers. Often used in ley pastures in cropping areas to rebuild soil nitrogen, e.g. Darling Downs. Snail medics preferred for ley pastures, barrel for permanent grass and legume mixed pasture.

Establishment

Sowing is in April, May and June. Sown into a prepared seedbed as a pure stand or as a mix with winter wheat or oats. Seed is surface spread, harrowed and rolled. If barrel medic is mixed with barley or oats it needs to be spread or planted separately at a shallow depth (< 20 mm). However snail medic can be planted up to 50 mm deep, with cereal seed. Seeding rate of 4 - 6 kg/ha for pure stands and 2 - 4 kg/ha in mixtures. Seed must be inoculated (Group AL) before sowing.

Good establishment will depend on rainfall during the autumn and winter. Medics are sometimes oversown into grass pasture. Heavy grazing before and after sowing reduces competition and tramples seed into the soil. Heavy grazing in early autumn will encourage seedling establishment, but should not be repeated each year as the grass component will weaken and decline. Very hard seeded,

softening and germinating over a 5 year period. This helps survive drought.

Water

Most suited to regions receiving 400 - 800 mm rainfall, with >30% occurring during winter. Yield varies greatly between years, related to rainfall and its distribution through the year.

Soil fertility

Prefer neutral to alkaline (pH 6.5 - 8.0) clay or clay-loam soils of high fertility. Sulphur deficiency may be evident in permanent pastures, and cause pale green leaflets. Surface application of 20 - 60 kg S/ha will be adequate for dry matter production for 3 - 5 years.

Diseases and pests

Blue green and spotted alphas aphids are the primary pest. Tolerant varieties are available.

Animal health

Bloat is the main concern, though not as evident as with lucerne and clover. Occurs primarily in wet winters following dry summers, when medics are dominant. If possible delay grazing until medic matures.

Further information

Contact the DAFF Customer Service Centre by Phone 13 25 23, or Email callweb@daff.qld.gov.au

More technical notes can be found at: www.dairyinfo.biz

Callow et al. (2013) Successful Dairy Production in the Sub-Tropics

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