

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate use



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Brassicas for back-up

When pasture growth or quality is insufficient to meet stock needs, many farmers turn to brassica crops for back-up.

An invaluable feed source during times of need, brassicas are also considered an ideal crop to sow as part of a pasture renewal programme.

There are three key factors that contribute to the success of any brassica crop, advises Ballance Technical Consultant, Jeff Morton.

'The selection and preparation of the paddock(s); the selection of the brassica crop; and the management of the brassica crop are the three ingredients for success with brassicas. Taking short-cuts or making poor decisions at any of these stages will impact on the return on investment and the absolute value of any brassica crop.

'When choosing a paddock to use for a cropping cycle, look at your most poor-performing blocks of land, that is, those with low-fertility plant species, poor physical soil condition, or low nutrient status, as they will be yielding least economic benefit for your farm.'

Jeff says that early identification of these paddocks is ideal, as that enables them to be properly prepared for the brassica crop. This is particularly important for paddocks that require liming.

'Paddocks that are being cropped in brassicas as part of a pasture renewal programme will benefit most if soil pH is between 5.8 and 6.0. However, getting the soil pH right is just one part of the picture when it comes to soil testing. It's equally important to make sure that soil fertility will meet your crop's needs.'

The Ballance Brassica Test has been designed to give farmers all the information they need to determine their crop's nutrient requirements. Soil samples are taken and analysed for pH, phosphorus, potassium, sulphur, magnesium, boron and available nitrogen.

'The Ballance Brassica Test will enable your Ballance representative to develop a fertiliser strategy that meets your crop's needs. As a general rule, you will require a source of nitrogen, and phosphorus, potassium and magnesium (if the soil is very low in these elements).

'The other nutrient that is vital for good brassica growth is boron. This trace element helps to stabilise plant cell walls and membranes, and without sufficient boron brassicas develop disorders such as brown heart and hollow stem,' says Jeff.

For more advice on soil testing and fertiliser strategies for brassicas contact your local Ballance Technical Sales Representative on 0800 222 090.