

## Spotlight on Species - white clover

### Background

- White clover is the most important legume worldwide (in USA it comes after alfalfa and red clover). More hay is made from, and more animals graze white clover than any other legume.
- Most common in less fertile and more extensively farmed land
- stolons that creep along the soil surface. Each node is capable of producing roots and potential new plants - so it has tremendous potential for vegetative spread through pasture.



### Two main types are:

- Dutch types – small leaves, very hardy, low growth habit, low growth potential
- Ladino – high production potential, high P & K requirement

### Diseases and Insects

- It has many diseases (especially viruses) and insect pests (especially nematodes), but chemical controls are not economic.

### Advantages

- 1) free N
- 2) high protein
- 3) high nutritional value (highly digestible)
- 4) growth complements grass (more active in summer than spring)
- 5) reduces risk
- 6) adds to crop rotations
- 7) reduces animal toxicities
- 8) environmentally acceptable
- 9) more interesting and attractive pastures
- 10) increased profit

### Disadvantages

- 1) bloat
- 2) higher P requirement than grasses
- 3) less competitive than grass
- 4) tends to have more insect problems
- 5) overall lower yield potential than grass
- 6) shallow rooted, not drought tolerant

### Common varieties

- old varieties – Will
- new varieties – Kopu-2, Jumbo, Alice

### Establishment

- very small seed: 0.7 g / 1000 seed, but rapid emergence - often the first species to emerge
- sowing rate 1-5 lb/ac in mixtures (usually 2-3 lb/ac) (pure plantings are not recommended)
- can be spring (April), ideally sown with a Brillouin seeder, but can be no-till planted, fall planting is not recommended. It can be successfully frost seeded in February.
- rhizobia coating is usually not required, unless there is no history of white clover on the area (e.g. following clearing of forest)