

The role of white clover

Achieving the target of 25-30% white clover in a sward can be difficult. Coated white clover provides the clover seed with nutrients to aid faster establishment.

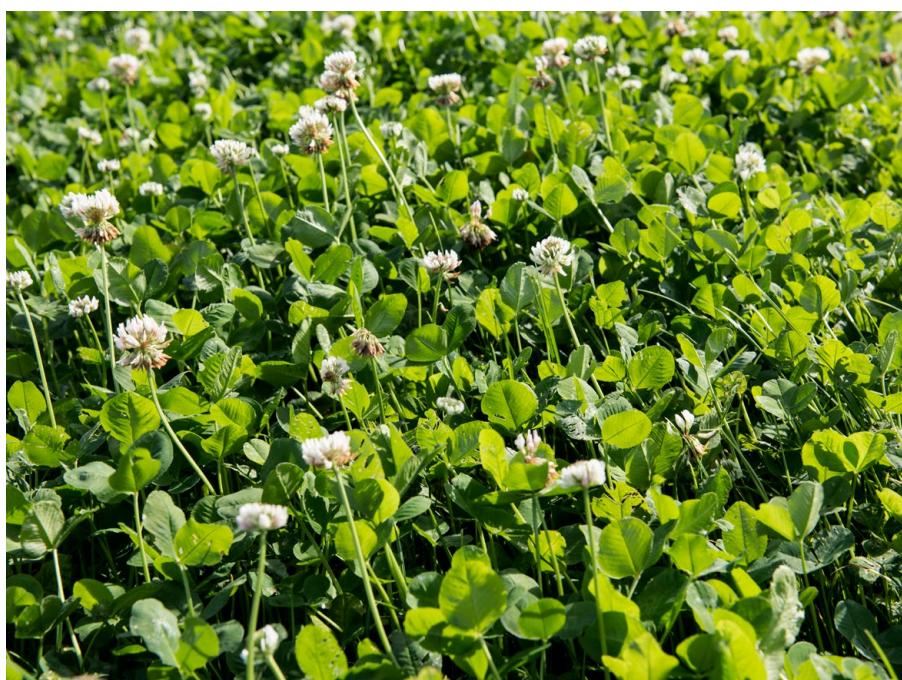
White clover can supply over 150 kg nitrogen/ha. However, in order to achieve animal and sward production benefits from clover, an established sward needs a clover content of 25 to 30%. Even under good management practices successful clover establishment can be difficult on farm as it is a very small seed and slower than grass to germinate. The small seed size means it has fewer reserves than grass to draw on during the early stages of development and is more prone to stress and poor establishment.

Coating clover seed

Coating clover seed can substantially improve establishment and productivity. The coating used for clover contains beneficial ingredients to aid improved germination and provide more energy to the seed. These include:

- Fertiliser including phosphorus to promote root growth and allow the clover plant to establish quicker and better compete with grasses for soil nutrients
- Rhizobium inoculants to ensure rapid nodulation by rhizobium strains which will fix N for the clover and grass plants

Coated white clover has been shown to establish quicker and produce seedlings with longer petioles and larger leaves. Coated white clover can be successfully used when completing a full reseed or alternatively to overseed clover into an existing sward. To maximise the success of clover establishment, best management practice must be applied.



Successful establishment of white clover

White clover can be sown as part of a full reseed or oversown into an established sward.

All our mixtures are available with or without clover depending on your preference. From January 2020, derogation farms must sow a minimum of 1 kg coated clover/acre when reseeding or 0.6 kg/acre uncoated clover. Using coated clover seed will help the clover establish quickly.

Alternatively overseeding with coated white clover presents a good opportunity to cost effectively increase the clover content in your swards. We have developed a number of points which will greatly increase your chances of success when sowing white clover into an existing sward.

Tips to successfully overseed with white clover

- Ensure adequate soil pH and P and K indices
- Seed must make contact with the soil – an old sward with a “butt” is unsuitable
- Control weeds before sowing clover – it is much more costly and less effective to try to control weeds when clover is growing
- The ideal time for overseeding is following a heavy silage harvest or following tight grazing in late April or May
- Watch the weather – requires rain after sowing. Poor germination and establishment will occur if weather comes dry after sowing
- Sow 2 kg/acre of coated white clover seed with 1 bag 0:7:30
- Clover can be broadcast or stitched into the sward
- Sow in 2 directions – up/down and then across the field
- Roll after sowing
- Avoid spreading N for the remainder of the year

Management post-sowing

- Graze frequently, at low covers (<1200 kg DM/ha) for the first few grazings to allow light to reach the base of the sward
- Subsequently, graze at 1200 - 1400 kg DM/ha to a residual of 4 cm
- Avoid cutting for silage as clover can then out-compete grass
- Maintain optimum pH, P and K in the soil