FACTSHEET

Tackle Facial Eczema risk with forages

Worried about FE?
Some forages help reduce the risks!

FE is caused by the ingestion of toxin producing spores from *Pseudopithomyces*, a fungus that thrives on dead matter in pastures. The amount of dead matter varies greatly between different forage crops and pastures. By selecting lower-risk forage species, you can potentially reduce the risk of FE on your farm.

Herb crops, pure legume swards, legume-based pastures, and tall fescue produce less dead matter than ryegrass, cocksfoot or brown top pastures, making them lower risk for grazing during facial eczema season.

Spring is the ideal time to plant these crops and assess your swards leading into facial eczema season.

Crop Summary

1. Pure Chicory

Chicory crops, when properly established without grass, are considered a 'low risk crop' due to producing less dead matter for spores to thrive on. Chicory can also be grazed to higher residuals, offering high-quality, high-protein feed for all animal classes, making it an excellent choice for managing FE risk.

2. Lucerne (Alfalfa)

Lucerne is a popular legume across various farming systems and is considered a 'low-risk' crop for FE season. It thrives in well-drained soils and while typically sown alone, it can also be mixed with clovers and even some grasses for additional nitrogen fixation and pasture resilience.

3. Tall Fescue

Tall fescue is a resilient alternative to ryegrass, especially in the upper North Island where summer growth and persistence are challenging. With faster grazing rotations, and good management, tall fescue is considered 'lower risk' to graze than ryegrass.

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4. Red and White Clovers

Clovers produce minimal dead matter, and what they do produce breaks down rapidly, preventing accumulation at the base where spores could develop.

Clovers can be added to almost all forage and pasture options for longer-term use. The addition of clovers provides excellent ground cover, improves metabolisable energy (ME), and fixes nitrogen in the soil, enhancing overall forage resilience.

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By selecting and managing the right pasture species, you can potentially reduce the risk of facial eczema, on your farm.

For more tailored advice, consult with your local agronomist, vet or farm supply store representative.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about the EFEI programme visit: www.beeflambnz.com/EFEI

Olykan ST, Moot DJ. 2024. A review of pasture mixes and management strategies to reduce the impact of facial eczema in New Zealand *New Zealand Journal of Agricultural Research, 1–23*. https://doi.org/10.1080/00288233.2024.2393800

Clover management in summer: https://beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub/PDF/annual-legumes-enhance-animal-production-summer-dry-pastures.pdf

Chicory + cattle growth on chicory: https://beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub/PDF/increasing-cattle-growth-rates-chicory.pdf

Lucerne: https://beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub/PDF/lucerne-book-summary-papers-establishing-and-managing-lucerne.pdf

DairyNZ Tall Fescue factsheet: www.dairynz.co.nz/feed/pasture-species/tall-fescue/

EFEI Eliminating Facial Eczema Impacts

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