

Flexible feeding options with fast-growing Swift

Swift is a new, fast growing rape/kale hybrid that offers superior regrowth ability and good all year round performance. The forage rape genes in Swift give it the ability to grow very fast while the kale genes deliver very good winter hardiness. It is a combination that means Swift is a superb catch crop for countering late season grazing shortages.

- Excellent autumn/winter feed.
- Suitable for late sowing.
- Late maturing (in 90-110 days with superior regrowth potential).
- Good late season yield (10.5 tonnes DM/ha).
- High energy (12.8MJ/kg DM).
- Good crude protein source (15-24%).

Crop management guidelines:

Sow into a fine, firm seed bed that will have a reliable moisture supply. For winter crops choose free draining soils to avoid damage to the soil structure. Sow at 2-3kg/acre at a depth of 1cm. Sow at least 10 weeks before feed is required. Use ULTRASTRIKE treated seed to protect from insect attack, improve establishment and boost crop yield.



Dairy heifers grazing Swift on the edge of the Peak District in December.

Grazing Management:

- Graze 90-110 days after sowing. If planning to graze more than once, care should be taken with the first grazing ensuring the main stem remains intact to protect the future regrowth of the crop.
- Care should be taken when sowing early as this is a very vigorous crop and if not grazed it will bolt.
- Do not allow stock sudden unrestricted access to the crop. Introduce animals to the new feed gradually (over 7-10 days).
- An adequate water supply is essential (3-5 litres of water per 1kg/DM).
- Feed extra fibre in the form of hay or straw.
- Apply 30-40kgN/ha after the first grazing.



Successful Brassica Production and Utilisation

Field Selection

- Select fields where production is falling.
- Soil test 7-8 weeks prior to sowing.
- Apply fertiliser and lime as per specific soil test recommendation.
- Weed control – control weeds prior to sowing.
- Choose appropriate brassica crop to meet your feed requirements (contact British Seed Houses Ltd).

Sowing

The majority of brassicas are sown into a cultivated seedbed, however it is possible to direct drill these crops. Seeds should be sown at a maximum depth of 10mm to ensure uniform germination. A fine, firm seedbed is important to get good soil to seed contact, rolling the field is recommended.

Ultrastrike treated seed is recommended for both cultivated and direct drilled fields to protect against insect attack and to enhance establishment and crop performance.

Once the crop is sown, it is important to monitor the crop and apply the appropriate insecticides and herbicides to remove any problems that will be detrimental to crop performance.

Fertilisers

The soil pH is very important and should be at least 5.6, with an optimum of between 5.8-6.5. Brassicas respond very well to high levels of fertility and are particularly responsive to Nitrogen (N) and Phosphorus (P). Brassica crops should have between 30-50kgN/ha and 40-60kgP/ha available to them at sowing.

Feeding recommendations

There are a couple of ways to utilise brassica crops effectively, and the most common is strip grazing. Strip grazing will increase utilisation, nutrition and prevent wastage. When strip grazing, breaks should be long and narrow to allow animals access to the crop. Allowing the animals unrestricted access (set stocking) is ideally suited to summer lamb fattening.

Allow stock onto the brassica crop for 1-2 hours (20% of dietary intake) a day building up to unrestricted access in 7-10 days. Do not allow sudden unrestricted access as it can upset the balance of rumen microbes, thus resulting in poor animal performance.

Forage crops are highly digestible and are low in the essential fibre that promotes effective rumination (cudding).

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