

Make sure its apples versus apples when comparing forage crop yields

“Fresh weight yield should not be used to compare forage crop yields,” says national agronomy manager for Pioneer Hi-Bred Australia, Peter Kleinhanss.

He says a good example of why this comparison is often misleading was on Lex and Jo Iker’s property ‘Vandyke’ at Springsure last season.

“Lex had a paddock containing both Pioneer Graze-N-Sile, which is a grain-bearing sorghum, and Pacific BMR, a sorghum-sudan grass hybrid,” says Peter.

Peter says a dry matter comparison is the correct way to report forage crop yields, in this case for silage production.

“The fresh weight yield of the BMR was 15 tonnes per hectare and Graze-N-Sile was 14 tonnes per hectare. But when the fresh yields were converted to dry matter using actual crop moisture, at 5.25 tonnes per hectare, the Graze-N-Sile easily out-yielded the BMR, which had 4.22 tonnes per hectare of dry matter.

Peter says it is vital to compare “apples with apples” in this way so producers have the correct information when they are developing feeding rations for their livestock.

“Forages containing the BMR (brown mid rib) gene can assist with better digestibility,” Peter says, “But to get this benefit, BMR needs to be cut every four to six weeks when it reaches about one metre in height and before it begins to flower.”

Peter says this is not an acceptable practice for most growers and graziers, especially when they use contractors to harvest their forage crops.

“Just because forages with BMR are planted, it doesn’t necessarily mean better quality if they aren’t harvested at the correct stage of maturity.

“Using BMR does not guarantee quality,” he says.

“Graze-N-Sile is a much better option for beef enterprises because it produces more grain than forage, giving a high energy and high quality silage with just one cut.

“We used a computer model to analyse independent digestibility and palatability tests by



Harvesting the Pioneer® brand Graze-N-Sile for silage

CASCO Agritech. It showed that the Graze-N-Sile on the Iker’s property would have produced 112 kg per more beef per hectare than the BMR.”

Peter says in this case the higher moisture content in the BMR compared to the Graze-N-Sile would have meant extra harvesting costs for the BMR.

“The bottom line from extra beef yield and lower harvesting costs is that Pioneer Graze-N-Sile gave an extra \$182 per hectare profit over the BMR.”

Rob Watson of Marshall Seed and Grain Services says both of the Iker’s forage crops were planted on a full profile of moisture. He says they had good early rain but nothing towards the end of the growing period.

Both forage crops were harvested for silage in May this year.



Lex Iker in his crop of Pioneer® brand Graze-N-Sile

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