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On dry, alkaline soil? Lucerne could be the answer.



Many farmers are increasingly concerned about which forage crops to plant to withstand lack of rain.

However, for farmers on dry, neutral or alkaline soils lucerne could well be the answer. Once well established, this deep rooting legume is extremely drought resistant and produces yields of up to 14t of dry matter even in drought years. These yields can then be converted into excellent high protein silage.

The crop is rather slow to get going during the first year but this can be off set by undersowing it to a spring cereal in April or sowing after winter barley in July. As it lasts for around four yeas it is also very cost effective.

The crop should not be grazed as there is a risk of bloat. However the silage and/or hay produced is very high quailty and, as the crop is a legume, there are added benefits: it is self-sufficient in N and will improve the soil for subsequent crops in the rotation.

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