

Spraying Sainfoin: What Works Best?



Spraying

MCPA+ MCPB (NO LONGER ON LABEL APPROVAL) can be applied at first trifoliate leaf stage in the spring to help control broadleaved weeds. This may need to be done twice if there is a bad weed infestation. In many cases this spring application is essential when the crop is being established.

After this management will depend on whether a pure stand of sainfoin is being grown, or a mixture with grasses.

Pure Stand

A pure stand can be sprayed with carbetamix around December to eliminate grass weeds and chickweed. This will increase the longevity of the crop.

Mixture With Grasses

For a mixture with grasses this spray is obviously unsuitable. The grasses will compete with the weeds in any case. In trials at Cirencester and also at NIAB we found that a late strain of meadow fescue was the best performing grass mixture at about 66% sainfoin and 33% meadow fescue in the sward.

Ryegrass can also be used as a companion, but this should be a tetraploid variety and late heading so as to be less competitive with the sainfoin (see Zhigang Liu, RAC 2006: 'Developing a Modern Agonomy for Sainfoin').

For organic farmers, we recommend always sowing with companion grasses.

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