

Hi Bruce,

Such a shame about the great dramas with importing NZ seed to Australia. Australia seems to have no trouble in importing New Zealanders themselves!

I still wasn't sure of whether I'd be interested in planting Runner 2 or Rhino. All I do know is, in Australia it seems impossible to get any Lucerne varieties less than winter activity rating of 4 and that is a Pioneer (Seed Distributors) variety L31.

In subtropical South East Queensland the trend seems to have been to plant highly winter actives 7 through 10. Personally from the research I have done, my tertiary qualifications in Agronomy and from working on Lucerne farms as both a farmhand, and water bore drilling contractor, I tend to think that farmers have had the wool pulled over their eyes by the seed companies with glossy brochures telling them how wonderful such and such a breed of highly winter active Lucerne is.

Correct me if I am wrong here, but winter actives compared to winter dormant.

1. Are more prone to root rots and prefer sandier soils (No good for the heavy black alluvial in this district)
2. Are more prone to crown damage from machinery and livestock.
3. Are more prone to crown rots
4. Because they don't have rest during winter, they 'burn out' quickly.

All the above shorten stand life or lead to thinning out and consequent grass and weed invasion. For my part there is considerable expense in cultivation and replanting, that shouldn't be ignored.

4. They are sappier and thicker stemmed and thus take longer to dry down, and have a lower leaf to stem ratio.
5. They won't 'wait' for you, once stressed out by excess moisture or lack thereof, they drop their bottom leaves and forage quickly drops off rapidly.
6. Once new shoots form you have to be mowing them the day they should be mowed or else forage quality declines rapidly. No good in extended periods of wet weather where one can't mow, which is often the case of late.
7. The crops cut during winter are poor producing anyway and the variable costs associated with raking etc for a fortnight trying to dry them seem to outweigh the actual value of the crop. (Tractor/machine/man hrs vs gross value)
8. I've even noted that with winter actives that the new shoot forms before the crop is off and this 'green' material is continually raked into the windrow making things harder to dry and damaging the next crop also.

I would rather have a variety that yields well in the period that it is easiest to dry and makes no effort to grow between the end of April and the end of August. All the above things lead me to you with Rhino and Runner II

Feel free to correct me if I'm wrong on any of the above points I've made. I would like to hear or see a comparison sheet of yield, disease and pest resistances etc. between Rhino and Runner II so I could make an informed decision if seed did become available.

Kind Regards,

Marsden Kirchner