

PGG Seeds
Brassica systems editorial



BOB Telfer, Merriwa, NSW, pictured last month in his crop of Winfred forage brassica, sown into minimal moisture in mid March. At 12 weeks growth, the Winfred brassica was yielding 6600kg/DM/ha, compared with 4400kg/DM/ha from oats sown in the same paddock at the same time.

Mr Telfer runs a mixed grazing property of merino sheep, trade and breeding cattle. He planted the brassica crop to provide quality high-yielding winter feed for sheep and cattle, and for the opportunity to control problem grass weeds before sowing perennial grasses such as fescue.

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Farmers like Bob Telfer of Merriwa in NSW are increasingly adding a forage brassica crop to their farming mix.

In recent years flexible forage brassica crops have been introduced to the region – to quickly provide a bulk of quality stock feed when needed; as a break crop between cereals; or as part of a pasture renewal program.

Quality, quantity whenever you need it!

Farmers in a range of climatic zones are finding they can match forage brassicas exactly to when feed is needed; they provide a quick bulk of quality forage in a wide range of farming systems and seasonal conditions. For example, they can be planted in spring if there was no autumn break, or as a short-term late autumn/winter crop with an early break

As well as providing massive growth over a short period, the quality of forage brassicas compares well with other common feeds - with average crude protein levels of 17-22%, digestibility of 78-86% and metabolisable energy (ME) of 11-12 MJME/kg of dry matter. For growth animals generally require crude protein of 12-14%, metabolisable energy of greater than 10.5 MJME/kgDM and digestibility above 70%, brassicas meet all these nutritional needs required for animal production and growth.

In a 2005 Queensland Department of Primary industries & Fisheries/PGG Seeds evaluation of autumn-sown forage options, Hunter forage brassica (sown April 21)

yielded 20,456 kg DM/ha over 156 days. Nutritive value (at 26/9/2005) was 11.21 MJ ME/kgDM, 27.3% protein and 77.72% digestibility.

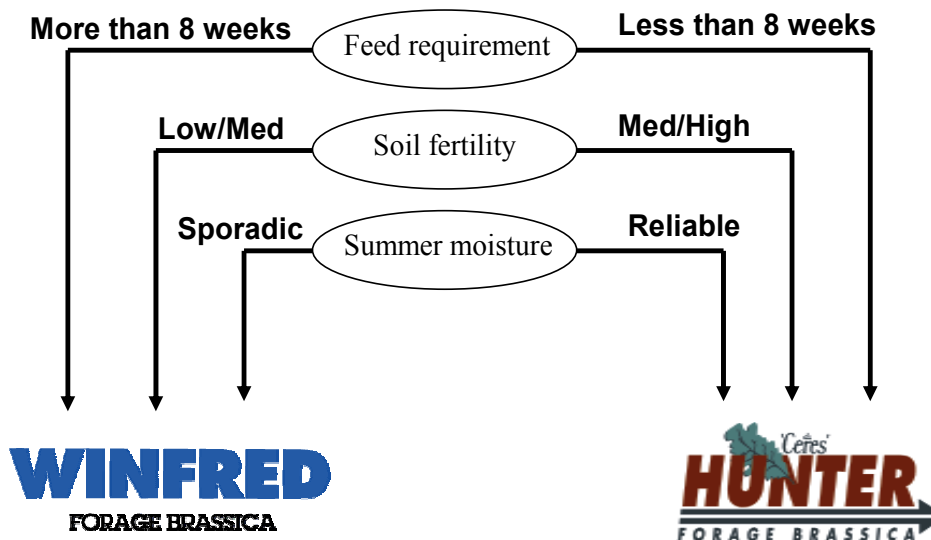
A break crop for cropping farms

Brassicas are an ideal break crop for controlling grass weeds, and for controlling fungal diseases on cropping farms. Forage brassicas (gross margin \$572/ha) for grazing are worth considering as an alternative to oilseed brassica crops such as canola (gross margin \$314/ha). See the PGG Seeds Brassica and Herb Bulletin for a full gross margin analysis.

The forage crop will require a boundary fence, a clean water supply for stock and preferably a means to subdivide the paddock to manage allocation and utilisation.

Which forage brassica?

Decision tool



Both Hunter & Winfred provide a large bulk of feed and multiple grazings. So before buying seed and planting – decide when you are likely to need feed, and how you will use it. Consider planting as split sowings to spread out the feed available for grazing – rather than having ‘all or nothing’. If planted at the same time in separate paddocks, Winfred & Hunter can complement each other in a grazing rotation – which is useful if large volumes of feed are required for an extended period of time.

Ask for a copy of PGG Seeds latest Brassica and Herb Bulletin to help decide the best system and best varieties to complement your pasture, forage or cropping program.