



# WATSON SEEDS



## NEWSLETTER

Summer 2015 Issue 2

## UP AND COMING 2015 EVENTS

We will be attending a number of events over the spring/summer and hope to see you there.



Photo by kind permission of MacGregor Photography

### SCOTLAND'S BEEF EVENT - 27th May 2015

We are looking forward to attending the Scotland Beef Event, organised by the Scottish Beef Association, which will be held by kind permission of the Alexander family at Mains of Mause, Blairgowrie, Perthshire.

The event will be based around the subject of beef from hills and in particular the latest technologies for sustainable beef production.

We will have a stand at the beef event and will have on display a range of leading grass varieties and Castle Mixtures.

Our distributor Harbro Ltd are one of the main sponsors and look forward to seeing you there.

(Our apologies if this event has taken place by the time you receive this newsletter)

### NSA HIGHLAND SHEEP - 09 June 2015

Another event we will be in attendance at is the National Sheep Association's Highland Sheep event. This will be hosted by UK Sheep Farmer of the Year, John Scott and his family, Fearn Farm, Tain, Ross-shire.

John's excellent grassland management contributes to the overall success of his farming business and we are delighted to be helping deliver this through the supply of seed mixtures.

There will be a farm tour to give visitors the chance to view the flock of commercial sheep, pedigree flocks of Texel, Beltex and New Zealand Suffocks as well as their Aberfield hybrids, which are a new addition.

We will have a stand at the event as well as co-producing the farm tour booklet. We will also have our display trays of leading grass varieties and Castle Mixtures here for you to view. We hope to see you there.



Photo by kind permission of Farmer's Weekly

### ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW - 18th - 21st June 2015

TIME TO VISIT WATSON SEEDS!

Again this year we will be located at the Pentland Pavilion situated behind the Grandstand on Avenue O.

Watson Seeds continues to proudly support the Royal Highland Show. With a wide variety of agricultural stands, livestock and machinery on display as well as the fashion, arts & crafts and food hall it's no wonder the show pulls in around 180,000 visitors from all over the UK and Ireland every year.

Please come along and visit us to chat with one of our team and enjoy some light refreshments. Everyone is very welcome.



Skateraw, Dunbar, East Lothian, EH42 1QR

Tel: 01368 840655 Email: [enquiries@watsonseeds.com](mailto:enquiries@watsonseeds.com) Web: [www.watsonseeds.com](http://www.watsonseeds.com)



## GRASSLAND SOCIETY

The four Scottish Grassland Societies have come together to form an association with the aims of raising their profile and widening their activities to parts of Scotland with no access to Grassland Societies at present. Target areas including Kintyre, Arran, Bute, Argyll and Caithness. The societies, under the aegis of the British Grassland Society, act to organise farm meetings throughout their areas to advance methods of production and utilisation of grass and forage crops for the promotion of agriculture and the public benefit, and also to promote the education and research into grass and forage crop production and utilisation. Recognising the benefits to be gained in working together, Spokesman Ian Whiteford said that one of the aims will be to encourage wider participation in the National Silage and Grassland Farmer of the Year competitions.

One of the first actions of the group was to appoint John Weir, Lacesston Farm, Gateside, Fife to judge this year's national silage competition. Following the judging, the overall winner has been announced as JL Thomson, Middleton of Potterton, Aberdeen. Mr Weir commented: 'a superb pit silage used to feed suckler cows and finishing cattle, with optimal usage in the ration for fattening

bought in store bullocks'. The runner up was our customer A&S Lawrie, Cuthill Towers, Milnathort. 'Here silage is used as part of the diet for the pedigree Ayrshire herd, with young stock and milk yields demonstrating the role that quality silage and utilisation plays in outstanding farm performance', commented Mr Weir.



South West Grassland Society visit to Upper Nisbet Farm, Roxburghshire on the 1st May 2014. By kind permission of our customer Mr Robert Neill - Beef Farm of the Year 2012



## RECORD BREAKING LARGE LAUDER LAMB

Congratulations to Dougie Runciman, Huntington Partnership, Huntington Farm, Lauder for this Scottish record breaking large lamb.

The Texel cross ewe lamb weighed a staggering 22lbs, nearly 10kgs when born, which is more than twice the size of an average lamb.

Perhaps the lamb's mother had been eating more than her fair share of Dougie's fields of Dundas Castle Mixture!

Seed is supplied through John Hogarth Ltd.  
Photo by kind permission of Heather Runciman

## NEW FORAGE MIXTURES FOR 2015

We have new additions to our forage mixtures this year. These are to include rape/kale hybrid as they have become increasingly popular.

Our Hybrid 1 mixture is rape/kale hybrid, forage rape and main crop turnip which can be sown later and utilised pre or post Christmas. The Hybrid 2 is a mixture of rape/kale hybrid and stubble turnips, the vegetative yield from the hybrid should extend the grazing days. It can be sown in July and utilised pre Christmas.

'The crop has never stopped growing since it was sown in the summertime. The field is full of lambs and I do wonder when I will see any of them again!' Andrew Provan, Parkhall, Lanarkshire, pictured in an outstanding field of Hybrid special mix.

Please contact us on 01368 840655 for more information or visit [www.watsonseeds.com](http://www.watsonseeds.com)







## PPI LAUNCHED IN IRELAND

***‘Be not the first for whom the new are tried, nor yet the last to lay the old aside’***

Alexander Pope 1711

The composition of our mixtures is clearly central to the success of the resulted field performance.

Varieties are selected from all the relevant plant breeders having assessed data from Independent Recommended Lists, and other ancillary work.

Teagasc Moorepark are responsible for producing the Grass and Clover Recommended List in Ireland.

They have recently developed the Pasture Profit Index (PPI) as a guide to assist in variety selection when planning to reseed.

The PPI is designed to give a comparative monetary value (Euro/Ha) on varieties. This is a new and unique way of further differentiating varieties by indicating a relative profitability difference between grasses on the Irish Recommended List.

We celebrate any work that helps ourselves and farmers better identify the “wheat from the chaff” so to speak and it could be that this idea of putting a monetary value on individual varieties should be considered for the recommended list in Scotland, England and Wales.

Results have now been published, yet, not all the recommended varieties on the list have been fully tested so it is very much a work in progress project.

As we all know in science a good theory or hypothesis has to meet at least two criteria:

1. It has to be consistent with all the available data, and
2. It can also be tested so we can find out whether it is trustworthy.

This is not meant in any way as a criticism of the potential merits of the PPI index over time.

It is advised by Teagasc that the PPI should be used in conjunction with the DAFM 2015 Recommended List to ensure farmers are selecting the best available perennial ryegrass varieties to meet their particular requirements.

Absence of a PPI rating should not inhibit use of varieties on the list as a great number of recommended varieties have no PPI rating. It is hoped that by 2017 100% of the Irish Recommended List will have a PPI ranking. Rankings will of course change as more cultivars and data are included.

We are fortunate to have a great number of varieties in our portfolio that rank very highly on the PPI figures thus far produced, but will largely focus on the full recommended list for varietal selection until the PPI data reflects a broader picture of the comparative merits of candidate varieties for inclusion in our mixtures.



## APRIL SILAGE!



Farmers across Ireland are now reaping the benefits of our mixtures through a number of distributors. We have tailored the composition of our award winning mixtures and they only contain varieties that are recommended in Ireland, on either the DAFM or the AFBI 2015 recommended list.

Gearoid Murphy from Skibbereen, Co.Cork is pictured with this season's first cut from his Tantallon sward. The crop was harvested on 23rd April 2015 and yielded 8 x 800 kgs round bales per acre.

Gearoid and his father Gerard manage their high production dairy herd of Doneen Holsteins. 'Our Dairy Farm depends largely on grass to produce quality silage to deliver performance over the housed period'. Maize silage is also used in conjunction with their high D value silages. 'Grass is our most cost effective feed and our priority is to, where possible, maximise as much milk production from our swards such as this field of Tantallon'.

The Tantallon mixture was chosen with the advice of Darren Lynch from local supplier Barrett Agri.





# AGRISCOT 2014 - SUPER SILAGE

Our great Scottish silage makers were given a run for their money by our Southern neighbours in the 2014 AgriScot silage competition.

The inaugural Young Farmers class, in particular, felt the English presence and was won by Oliver Parkinson from Rolling Pin Farm, Preston, Lancs. Oliver is from a family farming business milking 200 dairy cows.



Oliver Parkinson, Rolling Pin Farm, Preston.

Donald Miller, from Trail Flat, Lochmaben, was the sole Scot in the top 3 of the Young Farmers class, coming 2nd with his excellent 41.4DM clamp silage. Matthew Pye, from High Farm, Carnforth was placed 3rd.

In the main 1st cut clamp silage competition Lanarkshire led the way, with a 15th of May cut analysing 76Dvalue and 16% crude protein from A.A. Baird, Auchnotroch, Lesmahagow taking the top spot. The winning silage will play a hugely important part in the low-concentrate ration fed to the 345 dairy cows at Auchnotroch, with grazed grass and forage being responsible for 4000 litres of the 6500 average annual yield.



Andrew Baird, Auchnotroch, Lesmahagow.

J. & A. Nelson of Redcroft, Castle Douglas produced the 2nd placed clamp sample, with J.A. Salthouse & Son of Wilson House Farm, Preston placed 3rd.

All of the top 3 in the Big Bale section came from Scotland, with 1st and 3rd coming from the parish of Lockerbie and a Stranraer produced silage taking 2nd place.



Peter and Susan Morris with their daughters Joanna and Janet, Greengate House Farm, Middlebie, Lockerbie.

The winning Big Bale silage, from PJ & SM Morris of Greengate House Farm, was produced on the 28th of August with a DM of 67 and Dvalue of 75. The Morris Family, Peter and Susan with daughters Joanna and Janet run 210 Greyface ewes alongside their 150 Holsteins on the 300acre grassland farm.

Second place Big Bale class was John Watson Esq, of High Mark, Stranraer. The AgriScot Silage Competition is sponsored by Watson Seeds, however this particular John Watson is no relation!

Competition convenor, Andrew Best of Watson Seeds, commented:

'2014 has been a fabulous year for grass growth. With terrific weather leading to abundant yields and overflowing silage pits and stackyards.

'As is often the case, quantity and quality do not always go hand-in-hand. Bumper crops meant, in many cases that quality, especially in terms of things like Crude Protein content, was actually diluted. This meant many of the silages entered this year were of slightly lower quality than we have previously seen.

'However, our winners, and indeed the finalists in each class, are to be congratulated for producing top class silages.

'It is a pleasure to have fresh samples of these crops on display at AgriScot to discuss with other farmers. I am also sure that the stock on each of the winning farms will take great pleasure in their daily bite this winter.'



# AGRISCOT 2015

By the time you are reading this article, you will probably have either got your first cut of silage in the pit or maybe just about to start either filling the pit or bales. Whatever your situation, we would like to remind you about the annual silage competition for Agriscot, which this year will be held on the 18th November 2015. To be judged again by Mr Hugh McClymont, of the SAC Crichton Royal Farm, Dumfries.



Hugh judging the 2014 competition.

As in previous years, the silage competition is split into three sections:

Class One	1st Cut Clamp Silage
Class Two	Big Bale (any grass cut)
Class Three	Young Farmer under 26 years of age. 1st or 2nd Cut Clamp Silage

Prizes for each class:

1st Prize	10 acres of any Watson Seeds Castle Mixture
2nd Prize	5 acres of any Watson Seeds Castle Mixture
3rd Prize	2 acres of any Watson Seeds Castle Mixture

With an acre of grass costing over £70 an acre, a first prize would be worth over £700.

The judging will be in two stages:-

## STAGE 1:

Chemical analysis. All entries should be sent to Andrew Best no later than Friday 9th October 2015 by email to [andrewbest@watsonseeds.com](mailto:andrewbest@watsonseeds.com).

Please enclose contact details with the entries as follows:

Trading Name of Entry	Email Address
Contact Name for Entry	Address with postcode
Mobile Number	Silage cut date
Land Line Number	

Entries from Stage 1 will be reduced to five finalists in each class.

## STAGE 2:

The top five entries from each class will have the entries judged on fresh samples.

All fifteen finalists will be displayed on the day at Agriscot.

We look forward to receiving your entry.



## CORPORATE SUPPORTER OF RSABI

Watson Seeds are delighted to be working in partnership with RSABI, Scotland's unique charity supporting those who have worked on the land, for a second year.

RSABI help over 500 people across the country struggling with hardship and last year the charity provided in excess of £520,000 in direct financial assistance.

Watson Seeds recognise RSABI's commitment and determination to make a difference – if you know someone who needs help in rural Scotland, put RSABI in contact. Further, as proud Corporate supporters of this great cause, we urge individuals, businesses and larger organisations to similarly demonstrate support for RSABI by joining the Supporter Scheme in 2015.

With ambitious plans to help many more people throughout the country, RSABI are currently running two campaigns taking their important work from strength-to-strength. Please also note the new phone number that can also be used to access the charity helpline.





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# SUMMER-SOWN BRASSICAS

## SUMMER-SOWN BRASSICAS OFFER CHANCE TO CUT BOUGHT-IN FEED COSTS

Brassica fodder crops sown after first cut silage or early season grazing can offer a significant boost to forage stocks and reduce reliance on bought-in feeds, advises Iain Eadie of Germinal.

Fast growing crops such as hybrid brassicas, stubble turnips or forage rape have the potential to produce high energy grazing crops for growing and finishing livestock within 10-12 weeks and also act as an effective break crop in reseeding programmes.

'These fodder crops can provide a very versatile option for dairy, beef and sheep farmers,' he says. 'Crops drilled in June and early July can provide a valuable additional forage source before the end of the summer.'

'In some cases this may be as a break crop before autumn grass reseeding, but if managed appropriately - with care taken to avoid damage at the base of the main stem - earlier drilled hybrid brassica crops will re-grow and allow a second or even third grazing.'

'Alternatively, crops sown by the first week of August in Scotland can be grazed into the autumn months. Swift hybrid brassica has the highest yield potential, and is the most winter hardy so best suited to out-wintering. The variety Redstart is the fastest to establish and offers higher quality, though is not quite as high yielding.'

Important management guidelines when making use of all brassica fodder crops include the provision of an alternative forage source, either as big bale hay or straw, or grazing on a run-back area.

'Brassicas should make up no more than 70% of the dry matter ration, and it is also important to provide access to fresh water,' adds Iain Eadie.

Establishment of brassica fodder crops is best achieved by drilling into a fine, firm and residual-free seedbed resulting from conventional cultivations, but under the right conditions seed can

be direct drilled. Using seed that is dressed with an effective all-in-one seed treatment will minimise the risks of pest, disease and even bird damage through to seedling stage.

'It is always advisable to test soils in advance so that soil nutrient levels can be corrected in the seedbed through fertilisation, and additional nitrogen may be appropriate at different stages to ensure maximum returns,' concludes Iain.

'These crops are economic to grow and will provide the best returns when grown to their full potential. Swift and Redstart, for example, can produce up to 10 tonnes DM/ha and will generally be higher yielding than stubble turnips or forage rape. In all cases, however, the cost per tonne of dry matter from brassica fodder crops can typically amount to less than half that of bought-in concentrate feeds, offering the opportunity for significant savings and reduced reliance on more expensive supplements.'

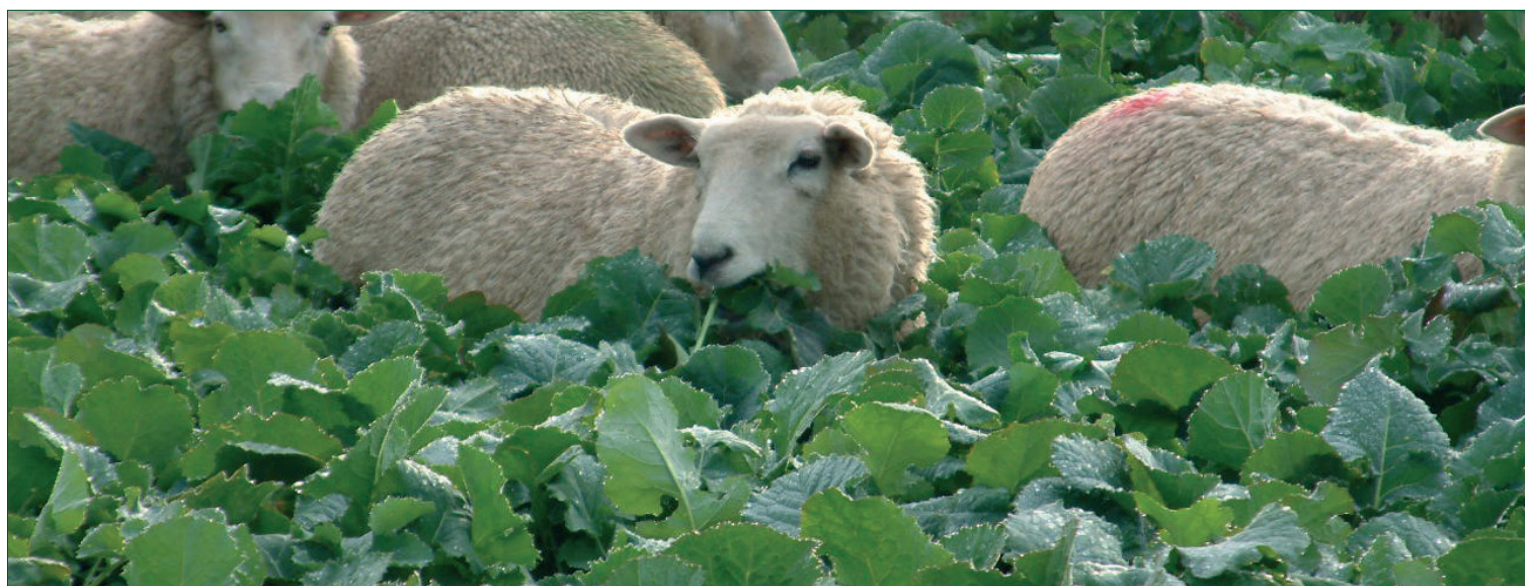
Growth rates in growing cattle of up to 0.75kg/head/day are achievable of brassicas when supplemented with straw as a fibre source, whereas finishing lambs can gain up to 250g/head/day on brassicas.'

Best use of brassicas is achieved by strip grazing, with daily allowances established by weighing a square metre of the standing crop, knowing the dry matter required, and moving the fence to provide access to the right amount of forage.

## **YIELDS AND NUTRITIONAL VALUE OF SUMMER-SOWN BRASSICA FORAGE CROPS**

	DM (kg/ha)	DM (%)	ME (MJ/kg)	Crude Protein (%)
Stubble Turnips	6,500	9-12	10-13	17-18
Forage Rape	4 - 5,000	11-13	10-13	19-20
Hybrid Brassica	7 - 9,000	12-14	10-13	18-19

Source: Germinal Forage Options catalogue 2015



Hybrid brassicas such as Swift offer an alternative to concentrates for finishing lambs.



# KNOW YOUR SOIL

The benefits of good soil management are many and key to good production from grass.

Making the most of home grown forage will be majorly influenced by good soil management.



## Optimum stocking rates

Improving soil nutrient status will help improve stocking rates, and soil pH levels are key.



## Good early spring growth and production

Better soil structures will warm up earlier in spring and help drive grass growth.



## Less weeds

Soils with a poor nutrient status will encourage more weeds, they can tolerate lower soil pH levels and out perform productive grasses in these environments.



## High feed quality

Soils with good soil structures improve the performance of our new grasses which in turn increase the quality of the ley.



## Good animal performance

Soil structure can have a major bearing on the palatability of a grass ley, and it is intakes which drives production of meat or milk, every extra kg of dry matter from grass can increase milk production by 2.3 litres/cow/day.



Robert & Richard Moore, Newsham Hall Farm, Woodplumpton, Preston

Soils are living environments, and they are vital to its structure and nutrient release from soil to plant (the livestock beneath your feet), it is estimated that there is 500kg of living organisms in the top soil of every acre (nearly the same as a cow/acre).

Understanding your soil is part soil testing and as simple as having a look at what is below the surface, at a spades depth, look for worm activity, they are a great indicator of soil life. Smell the soil - a

good earthy smell indicates good soil microbial function, a rancid anaerobic smell indicates poor soil function and nutrient exchange.

We must look after our soils it is vital to farming future.

**“The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself”**

Franklyn D Roosevelt

By James Bretherton, Agscope Ltd



# WHY SHOULD I WORRY ABOUT MY SOIL PH ?

PH is a measure of the acidity or alkalinity of the soil. It is measured in pH units ranging from 4.0 at the acid end of the scale to 9.0 at the alkaline end.

The nutrient bands in the table show the relative availability of each nutrient at differing pH levels. A narrowing band indicates reducing availability. So it can be seen that extremes of pH either acid or alkaline cause the most problems.

A neutral soil around pH 7.0 is the most desirable, as it is at this level that pH has the least influence and most nutrients are available.

Fertiliser efficiency at differing pH  
(% of applied nutrient)

SOIL ACIDITY	NITROGEN	PHOSPHATE	POTASH
pH 5.0	53	34	52
pH 6.0	89	52	100
pH 7.0	100	100	100





# GORILLA FORAGE RAPE COMPETITION

## GORILLA - NEW RE-GROWING FORAGE RAPE

Breeder DSV have developed a new shorter forage rape that has the ability to regrow after an early grazing.

For your chance to win 1 acre (5kgs) free to try, email your answers to the following questions along with your contact details to us at [enquiries@watsonseeds.com](mailto:enquiries@watsonseeds.com).

- Q1 What is the sowing period for rape?**  
 A) May to August  
 B) March to May  
 C) August to September
- Q2 What is the sowing rate for broadcasting rape?**  
 A) 1kg/acre  
 B) 3kgs/acre  
 C) 4kgs/acre
- Q3 What is the D value of rape?**  
 A) 80  
 B) 56  
 C) 65
- Q4 What is the average fresh yields of a crop of rape?**  
 A) 4-10 tonnes/acre  
 B) 14-20 tonnes/acre  
 C) 10-14 tonnes/acre
- Q5 What is the crude protein in a crop of rape?**  
 A) 12%  
 B) 25%  
 C) 20%



GORILLA is a dark purple green, re-growing forage rape. The stature of GORILLA is slightly shorter than many current varieties but with good standing ability. The dry matter content of GORILLA is higher than average which leads to high total dry matter yields. Furthermore, the high dry matter content means that stock take in more useful food per kg and are likely to thrive better than on conventional forage rape varieties. GORILLA shows a moderately good resistance to powdery mildew. When sown early (for example in May). GORILLA can produce a first crop in August to cover a shortage of summer grass, then has good regrowth to achieve a second crop in November/December. Alternatively GORILLA can be strip grazed as required, with good regrowth potential.

Competition closes on Friday 10th July 2015 at 5pm. Winners will be contacted and seed delivered by Friday 14th July 2015.

## CONTACTS



**JOHNNY WATSON**  
[johnny@watsonseeds.com](mailto:johnny@watsonseeds.com)



**OFFICE**  
 Skateraw, Dunbar, East Lothian, EH42 1QR  
 01368 840655  
[enquiries@watsonseeds.com](mailto:enquiries@watsonseeds.com)  
[www.watsonseeds.com](http://www.watsonseeds.com)

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