

# Fodder Beet

## Why Fodder Beet

Large tonnage of feed in small area  
Higher yielding than kale  
Opportunity to spell other large areas of the farm  
Can be used for cattle or deer  
Keeps well, Holds feed value if chipped, 400 days before it goes to seed = big window for feeding, Able to be lifted, fed elsewhere or sold (flexible)  
Lower wintering costs  
Good in the dry compared to establishing other crops  
Cheap feed if get a good yield  
Easier to shift break fence than kale  
Good carcass yields if killing animals off the crop  
Higher energy than alternative crops  
Animals will dig for it in the snow  
Holds big numbers of stock well  
Can stand being grazed early if get into trouble in Autumn - e.g. 1st April  
Great way to clean up paddock for subsequent specialist crops  
Good break crop to slow down rotation  
Good to follow swedes/kale instead of double cropping.

## Discussion points

### Getting deer onto it

Usually pretty quick to adjust  
"Hair loss" in deer  
Offer a variety of other feeds, e.g. runoff pasture, baleage  
Supplement diet if required  
Introduce slowly (run off paddock)

### Variable growth rate in young deer

141gpd last season but not maintained after 60 days  
Extending livestock performance over longer period of time  
Southland trial with fawns has shown daily shifts are best

### Pests and diseases

Consult fodder beet growing guides and chemical applications  
Ensure good paddock selection with well cultivated, free draining soil  
Don't grow in the same paddock two years in a row  
Work out fertiliser and mineral applications.

### Deer "Go off it"

"Grew it 4 years ago and keen to look at it again but need to get 90+ days without option of taking them off"  
"Deer are loving it with *ad-lib* baleage"

### Overfatness

Good example: 120 on 2ha; 9kg in 60days; 59% yield; works had never seen GRs of 14 in early August.

Bad example: Had to go to the works to see as all overfat

### **Crop failures are expensive**

Several farmers reported that they tried it and had failures so didn't try it again.

Seed companies do not recommend direct drilling due to the need to establish a well cultivated, deep seed bed. Slow precision drilling is recommended. This is an expensive part of the process.

Decreased yield but cheaper with direct drill. Farmer trialled and got good results.

Need to get everything right and plan 12 months ahead.

Fert down spout with the seed

### **Dietary balance**

Feed test and balance with lacking nutrients

After eating the tops off- may need extra protein and fibre.

Baleage (lucerne or spring grass), pasture, hay, pea straw,

Softer varieties may be better for gut health in deer.

Sodium?

Phosphorus

### **Wind**

Watering

Choose sheltered paddock

### **Weeds**

Spraying programme

Amount of spray used

### **Sowing dates**

Soil temperature dependent - needs to be at least 8°C (seed company 5°C minimum and rising, not fluctuating)

DLF trials last year showed best yields when sown in late September to 10 October. Depends on cultivar a bit as well.

### **Bolters**

Pull early and dispose of outside paddock.

### **Velvet Leaf**

Follow MPI recommendations

### **Yield assessment**

Beet Guru app

# of samples needs

Large area

Variability in methods

Eye goes to the best bits

There are a lot of resources available and knowledgeable people to help with planning your fodder beet crop. The key is to do the homework and don't take any shortcuts.

Agricom Agrinote [www.agricom.co.nz](http://www.agricom.co.nz). Spec seeds [www.specseed.co.nz](http://www.specseed.co.nz)