

# Birdsfoot Trefoil

Birdsfoot trefoil can be seeded in combination with grasses and can be grazed as a non-bloating legume. Yield may reach 4 tons of hay per acre on well-drained soils with plenty of moisture (at least 20 inches/year). It does well on soil with moderate to poor fertility (although plenty of phosphorus is needed), and tolerates a pH range of 5.5-7.5. It's often less productive than alfalfa on deep, fertile, well-drained soils, but tolerates periods of drought. Stems are smaller and less rigid than alfalfa stems, and plants reach a height of 18-20 inches. More palatable than alfalfa, and can be a good alternative in areas that are not suitable for alfalfa production. When added to pastures, animal performance is increased.

Responds well to fall stockpiling—holds maturity and quality after a frost, and stockpiling helps increase root reserves at the end of the season.

Major pests to watch for: Leafhoppers, spittlebugs.

Crown and root rots are the most significant diseases.

Trefoil is slow-growing and not as competitive at first, so weeds should be controlled prior to planting.

Once trefoil establishes, it can form a dense mat of growth.

**Cutting/Grazing Management:** Regrowth originates from buds formed at leaf axils, so be sure not to graze too much stem growth. Wait until plants are 8 inches high to graze, and allow 24-38 days of rest period. Leave at least a 4" stubble. A 60 day rest period every three years helps maintain the stand.

When cutting for hay, take the first cutting at 1/10 bloom and leave a 4-6" stubble. Second cutting mid- to late-August.

Must be inoculated with birdsfoot trefoil type inoculant.



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## At A Glance:

### Key Features

- ◇ Long-lived perennial legume—persists for years when properly managed.
- ◇ Does not cause bloat in livestock like straight stands of other legumes.
- ◇ Does well in poorly drained soils with low pH.
- ◇ Can tolerate drought.
- ◇ Less productive than alfalfa, but can be a good alternative in poor alfalfa soils.
- ◇ Good for both sandy and clay soils.
- ◇ Improves animal performance in pastures.

### Best Uses:

Grazing, Dry Hay, Baleage, Haylage, Conservation.

### Establishment

Seeding Rate: 20-25lbs/Acre

Seeding Dates: Late Summer

Seeding Depth: 1/4"

If seeded with a small grain nurse crop, plant the small grain on 18 inch rows and remove it by cutting or grazing