



# WELLINGTON BIRDSFOOT TREFOIL

GOOD ALTERNATIVE TO ALFALFA IN POORER SOILS, WITH NO RISK OF BLOAT

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.

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.**



## 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

### Best Uses

Grazing, dry hay, baleage, haylage, conservation

### Establishment

Seeding Rate: 20-25 lbs/A

Seeding Dates: Late summer

Depth: 1/4"

Fine, firm seedbed recommended

Pack soil before and after planting for good seed establishment.

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

Perennial Legume

Southeast  
**AGRISEEDS** LLC



257 Pinson Rd.  
Rome, GA 30161  
(717) 687-6224

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