

Forage Factsheet – Birdsfoot Trefoil

Species Name: Birdsfoot Trefoil – *Lotus corniculatus*

Origin: Sweden

Longevity: 2-4 years.

Uses: Hay, pasture

Optimal time of use: Hay birdsfoot trefoil once per year during full bloom.

Recovery after use: Birdsfoot trefoil pasture requires four to six weeks of rest between grazing events.

Yield: Birdsfoot trefoil yields approximately 3825 lbs/acre (4336 kg/ha) in the Black and Grey soil zones.

Palatability/Nutritional Value: Birdsfoot trefoil is palatable and does not cause bloat in ruminants. Birdsfoot trefoil crude protein content at full bloom is approximately 9%.

Competitiveness: Birdsfoot trefoil is moderately competitive.

Winter Hardiness: Birdsfoot trefoil has poor winter hardiness. Winter survival is improved by deep snow cover and adequate rest prior to frost.

Drought Tolerance: Birdsfoot trefoil has fair drought tolerance.

Erosion Control: Birdsfoot trefoil is of limited use for controlling soil erosion, but is adapted to growing on poor soils.

Ease of Establishment: Birdsfoot trefoil is slow to establish. Seedlings have small weak roots and are sensitive to shade. Seed birdsfoot trefoil at 1/4" (2.6 mm) due to its small seed size.

Suggested Mixtures: Birdsfoot trefoil is best seeded alone, or with timothy, without a cover crop.

Salinity Tolerance: Birdsfoot trefoil has moderate salinity tolerance.

Flooding Tolerance: Birdsfoot trefoil is tolerant of up to four weeks of flooding. It is tolerant of wet soils throughout the year.

Soil Texture: Birdsfoot trefoil is adapted to moist sandy loam to clay soils in the Black and Grey soil zones. It tolerates soils that are wet or waterlogged, or soils low in fertility.

Acidity Tolerance: Birdsfoot trefoil can tolerate soil pH as low as 5.5.

Management Considerations: Inoculate birdsfoot trefoil seed to enhance nitrogen production. To improve establishment and stand longevity do not defoliate prior to full bloom in the first production year. Leave at least 3 inches (7.5 cm) of stubble following haying or grazing. Do not cut for 6 weeks prior to killing frost.