



# HEADING DATES

## Ryegrass heading dates

Heading date is when a paddock visually has 50% of the plants seed heads emerged. Heading dates are defined relative to the cultivar Nui, heading at day 0.

### Ryegrass heading date influences pasture production in two ways:

1. Timing of spring-flush: Very early through to mid season heading ryegrasses often produce more dry matter earlier
2. Timing of late spring/early summer loss of quality: Later heading cultivars hold quality, providing leafy high quality feed later in spring

### Key recommendations: Heading dates

- Sow a range of ryegrass cultivars with different heading dates to spread timing of heading and reduce loss of summer quality
- Sow ryegrasses with different heading dates in separate paddocks
- Sow no more than 50% of the farm in late or extremely late cultivars to reduce early spring feed pinches

### Aftermath heading

Aftermath heading refers to the number of seed heads produced after the main heading event. If there are a lot of seed heads produced (high aftermath heading) then this means pasture quality is reduced. If there are minimal seed heads produced (low aftermath heading) then pasture quality is maintained for longer.

## Heading dates of some perennial ryegrass cultivars

EARLY

### Earlier heading

- Often earlier flush of spring growth
- Early maturing
- Poorer late season quality
- Improved spring quality if aftermath heading is low

VERY EARLY	≤ - 12 days
Barbaria	- 20 days
Kangaroo Valley	- 17 days

EARLY	-11 to -6 days
Victorian	- 10 days
Bolton	- 8 days

MID	-5 to +7 days
Nui	0 days
Avalon	+3 days
Reason	Diploid +3 days

LATE	+8 to +21 days
Maxsyn	+8 days
Platform <sup>#</sup>	Diploid +12 days
Legion <sup>#</sup>	Diploid +14 days
Impact II	+16 days
Rohan	+18 days
4front	+18 days
Viscount	+19 days
Three <sup>60</sup>	Diploid +20 days
Ultra	+20 days

VERY LATE	+22 to +25 days
Base	Tetraploid +22 days
Matrix	+23 days
Array	+23 days
Reward	Tetraploid +24 days
Bealey	+25 days

EXTREMELY LATE	+26 to +36 days
Vast	Tetraploid +36 days

LATE

### Later heading

- Can be later flush of spring growth
- Late maturing
- Better late season quality
- Responds well to summer rainfall

<sup>#</sup>Due to small number of tip awns, Platform and Legion are certified *Lolium boucheanum*.