

# Fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*)

## Grows best:

Deep, heavier soils with moderate to high fertility.

Grows well around lagoons in Haines, MacGillivray and Gosse.  $\text{pH}_{\text{CaCl}_2} > 5.0-5.5$ .

Tolerant of waterlogging and moderate soil salinity.

## Key benefits

- ✓ Adaptable to **wet conditions and heavy soils**.
- ✓ **High productivity** in suitable soils.
- ✓ **Mediterranean types tolerate hot, dry summers** owing to deep rooting. Continental types are less tolerant.

## Critical factors

for persistence & productivity

- Thrives on **deep, fertile soil. More tolerant of a range of sub soil constraints** than other perennials.
- To maintain productivity and stock acceptance **fescue needs to be grazed at the 3-leaf stage**.
- **Select varieties based on soil and seasonal moisture;** Mediterranean type cultivars are more drought tolerant than continental types.
- Recent breeding of new continental varieties has led to improved stock acceptance with thinner leaves.
- **Very slow to establish** taking up to 2-3 years to see plants 5-10cm across.

## Grazing management

- When using Mediterranean types, grazing management is critical to get right otherwise the pasture will become very rank, stalky and unpalatable.
- Requires high grazing pressure in spring to prevent stem development and maintain quality.
- Recommend to be grazed at 3 leaves to maintain quality and prevent it from going rank.
- Can be grazed hard but requires periodic spelling to recover.
- Set stocking is not recommended.
- Limited recruitment after it has been established.
- Relaxed grazing pressure during flowering can encourage rhizome and tiller development in suitable cultivars, which helps increase tall fescue density if desired.
- Where continental types are grown and if dry conditions occur over summer, spell the pasture to assist survival.



## Establishment tips

- As per all perennial pastures, good weed and insect control prior to sowing.
- Moderate sowing rates allow better grazing control and clover inclusion.



**Above:** Fescue seed heads.

**Below:** Resolute fescue growing on Roo Lagoon, Gosse, November 2025.



## Challenges

- Needs to be managed carefully in order to achieve the balance between maximum stock production and plant persistence.
- Can become coarse and unpalatable if not properly grazed, which can prove difficult when grown on heavy clay soils as these are prone to pugging.
- If not managed, can outcompete all other plant species.

## Contact

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## Farmer insights:

Fescue can be highly productive, but struggles on lighter, sandy soils. It bares (thins) out on hill tops i.e. the soil dries out and it doesn't persist.'

— Tom Willson, Dudley

## Would they plant it again?

- Yes, on deep, heavy soils.**
- No, in shallow, sandy, drought prone soils.**

## Acknowledgements

*This project is funded by the Kangaroo Island Landscape Board.*