

Grower network urges graziers wanting to sow Leucaena wait until Rhizobium is available.

With high spring rainfall recorded across large areas of central and southern Queensland, many graziers are urgently wanting to sow Leucaena. However The Leucaena Network, the peak body that supports all Leucaena growers across Australia, are cautioning against sowing Leucaena without Rhizobium inoculant.

Earlier this year it was determined the leucaena rhizobium inoculum CB3126 was not producing effective, nitrogen fixing nodules on leucaena seedlings. The Australian Inoculants Research Group (AIRG) has since been able to utilize a back up strain CB3060 which has proven effective and is currently with New Edge Microbials for development. A January 2018 release of the inoculum is expected.

Craig Antonio, President of The Leucaena Network, the industry's peak grower organization is concerned that the release date of CB3060 cannot come soon enough for many graziers with indications many are planting without the necessary seed rhizobium.

"We have had significant feedback from growers who have been waiting for the right environment to sow their leucaena for years and so despite the lack of rhizobium are continuing to plant. This is understandable however research has shown that good long term production is reliant on ensuring that the right rhizobium is present for effective nitrogen fixation".

"Without effective nitrogen fixation, Leucaena plants could produce less biomass at lower protein concentration. This also lowers nitrogen supply to companion grasses, ultimately leading to significantly lower pasture productivity. In a 30yr grazing system, the economic impact of lower stocking rates and live weight gain could be enormous", he said.

Mr Antonio revealed that many growers were acting on unsubstantiated advice that the inoculum is unnecessary; that it can be applied after sowing; that alternatives will suffice including molasses; or that the need for the seed inoculation can be replaced by the application of nitrogen.

Mr Antonio believes it is a choice of short term pain for long term gain.

"To plant without inoculant will result in leucaena stands that will either be unproductive, or require a much higher level of maintenance including nitrogen fertilizer application every two to three years.

"We urge all potential leucaena growers to wait until the inoculum is available."

Ends

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