

Chickweed

Effects

- Reduced grass yield 10 plants/m² reduce ryegrass content by 50%.
- Reduced grass area: can smother grass completely.
- Risk of livestock poisoning: high nitrogen content.
- Affects silage making: high moisture content, difficult to wilt and poorer fermentation.
- 66% of new leys are seriously affected (Dow AgroSciences).

Spread by

- Seed; annual weed can complete 6 life cycles/year and produce around 2,500 seeds/plant.

Preventing establishment and spread

- Aim to establish dense, leafy swards;
 - graze new leys with sheep to encourage grass to tiller and prevent chickweed establishing
 - use field as part of grazing rotation rather than silage to improve sward density
 - once sward density is improved, alternate cutting and grazing
- Check acidity and nutrient levels in soil; likes high potash levels and may indicate high nitrogen and low phosphate and lime levels.
- Harrow out in the autumn and sow grass/clover seed to fill gaps, **topping is not effective**; chickweed spreads below cutting height.
- Mob stock 30-50 ewes/ha (15-20 ewes/acre) for 10 days when ground is dry where chickweed is less than 5% ground cover.
- Use appropriate herbicide when actively growing; in established leys mecoprop p/dicamba can be used.



Image courtesy of HGCA/BASF
Encyclopaedia of arable weeds



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