

# Effective Lucerne Removal

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## Take Home Message

**For effective lucerne removal, use a three-pronged approach: spray herbicides during vigorous growth; apply heavy and continuous grazing; cultivate (sweep or blade type) if plants are water-stressed.**

## When to Remove Lucerne?

The decision on when to remove a lucerne pasture in preparation for the next cropping phase is a compromise between the nitrogen and water needs of the first crop, and the summer feed needs of livestock.

With *spring removal*, benefits to the following crop include more of the nitrogen in lucerne residues being available for early crop growth, and some of the rainfall received following removal being added to the soil water store.

*Autumn (late) removal*, on the other hand, both provides valuable stockfeed and helps protect susceptible soils against erosion over summer. The first crop may, however, require more nitrogen fertiliser to optimise yield.

## How to Remove Lucerne Effectively?

Combinations of herbicides applied at the right time, heavy continuous grazing and correct cultivation are most effective.

- **Grazing Management.** The harder and longer lucerne is grazed over the
  - summer and autumn, the less that survives (see Figure 1).
- **Cultivation.** They require a lot of horsepower and can leave the ground
  - quite rough.
- **Herbicides.** To be effective, lucerne must be actively growing and
  - herbicides applied at the right stage of lucerne regrowth after grazing or
  - cutting (see Figure 1). To kill lucerne, the herbicide must move from the
  - shoots down into the crown and taproot. *Herbicides will be less effective if:*
  - they are applied when lucerne is not actively growing; incorrect
  - combinations are used; they are applied too soon or too late after grazing;
  - and/or the lucerne is grazed too soon after spraying.

Plants sprayed at stages 1 or 3 may result in little herbicide movement into the taproot, rendering the herbicide ineffective. Herbicides applied during stage 2 of regrowth will be most effective (Figure 1).

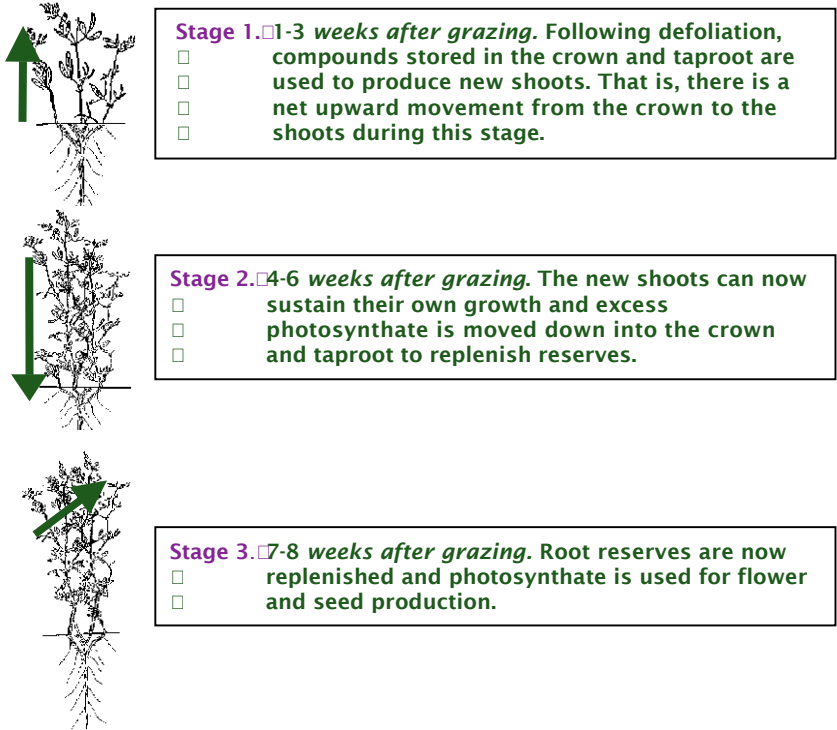


Figure 1. Stages of lucerne regrowth after grazing