Management of Common Rush in Organic Management Systems

Ian Cairns
SAC Consulting
Soft/Common Rush - Issues

- Problem of competition in permanent pasture & rough grazing Made worse in:
  - Poorly drained soils
  - High rainfall areas
- Dense, deep rooting clumps reduce grazing value of productive sward and compete below the soil
- Huge volume of seeds produced annually – seed bank – high capacity for rapid infestation
- Are you prepared to ‘live with’, control or eradicate?
Stage 1 – Soils

Address underlying problems

1. Drainage
2. Soil structure
3. Liming
4. Soil nutrient status

Starts with soil analysis
Improving grass productivity – stage 2 options

• Liming and fertilising

• Surface seeding
  – Direct drilling
  – Slot seeding
  – Tined harrow seeding
  – Broadcasting

• Reseeding – ultimate control strategy?
  – Deep Ploughing
  – Light surface cultivation and firming
  – Sowing competitive seed mixture
  – Rolling to consolidate
## Example Seed Mixture (upland)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid Ryegrass</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Perennial Ryegrass</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Perennial Ryegrass</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Perennial Ryegrass AberBite (T)</td>
<td>41.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S S Meadow Grass</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creeping Red Fescue</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Clover</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Light Infestation – Control by effective Grazing Management

• Avoid excess winter grazing
• Reduce risk of poaching
• Reduce risk of winter kill in sward
• Graze hard in the summer (prevent dominant rush growth)
• Cattle are better – less selective grazers and trampling
• Use topping for management in summer
The role of topping in management
Land improvement strategy – upland

Bespoke Management Strategy for each farm

- Productive inbye
- Enclosed Improvements
- Naturally wet or over 70% rush cover
Summary – but it’s a big subject!

• Classify need for land improvement in the context of the farm – Objectives, strengths & weaknesses
• Encourage vigorous grass sward
• Think about how grazing can assist in control on your farm
• Changing climate may make it more difficult to maintain productivity of upland swards
• What about role of agri-environmental schemes?
• Thanks for listening
• Questions or Comments?

Further information:
• SRUC website – www.sruc.ac.uk
• ian.cairns@sac.co.uk/mob: 07786171819