



Serradella

Ornithopus sativus

LEGUME · ANNUAL · COOL SEASON

PRODUCT OVERVIEW

French serradella is a hardy, spreading annual legume for cool-season cover, high-quality forage and biological nitrogen on light, acidic, low-fertility soils. Its deep roots support soil aeration, water access and nutrient cycling. Forage quality is comparable with many subterranean clovers, making it useful in regenerative crop-pasture rotations.

WHY SHORTLIST THIS PRODUCT

- Acid-soil adaptation**
 Performs on well-drained sandy or loamy soils across a reported pH range of 4–7.
- Nitrogen and soil function**
 Well-nodulated stands fix nitrogen, build cover and support the following rotational crop.
- High-quality forage**
 Reported flowering-stage crude protein is 15–25% with 65–75% dry-matter digestibility.
- Deep-rooted resilience**
 Established plants tolerate dry periods; adequate moisture is still essential during germination.

PRODUCT SNAPSHOT

CROP TYPE

Spreading annual pasture legume

GROWING WINDOW

Autumn, winter and spring

SOIL pH

4–7 · supplied fact-sheet range

RAINFALL GUIDE

18+ in / 450+ mm annually

SOIL FIT

Light, well-drained sandy or loamy soils

COLD RESPONSE

Frost tolerant; slower winter growth

Establishment and production

SOWING

- **Window**
Sow in autumn or early spring according to regional rainfall, temperature and the intended production window.
- **Monoculture pasture**
17–22 lb/ac (20–25 kg/ha) in the supplied fact-sheet program.
- **Mixed cover crops**
7–9 lb/ac (8–10 kg/ha) in the supplied fact-sheet program.
- **Placement**
Sow shallow at approximately 0.5 in (10 mm). Light harrowing can improve seed-soil contact.

ESTABLISHMENT

- Control weeds early because cool or dry conditions can slow initial growth.
- Maintain adequate soil moisture through germination and early establishment.
- Inoculate with compatible Bradyrhizobium spp. (Group S) to support successful nodulation.
- Confirm whether the lot is dehulled seed, hulled seed or pods before final rate calibration.

FERTILITY

Serradella generally needs modest inputs. In phosphorus-deficient soils, the supplied guide reports 9–18 lb/ac (10–20 kg/ha) phosphorus to support early growth. Diagnose and correct potassium or sulfur only where soil or tissue testing indicates a deficiency.

TECHNICAL REFERENCE

COMMERCIAL TYPE Pink / French serradella	PRIMARY USES Pasture, forage, cover crop, green manure
ROOT SYSTEM Deep-rooted annual	PLANTING DEPTH Approx. 0.5 in / 10 mm
MONOCULTURE RATE 17–22 lb/ac / 20–25 kg/ha	MIXTURE RATE 7–9 lb/ac / 8–10 kg/ha
INOCULATION Bradyrhizobium spp. · Group S	FORAGE FORMS Green, dried, hay or silage

MAXIMIZING POTENTIAL

- Protect seedlings, then begin grazing only after the stand is well established.
- Use rotational grazing to prevent overgrazing and retain enough leaf area for regrowth.
- Manage weeds during the early growth phase and monitor spring moisture.
- Use companion legumes or grasses where added pasture diversity and resilience are desired.

FIELD NOTE

Confirm the current cultivar, seed form, label, local recommendation and livestock program before planting or feeding.

Forage, resilience and cautions

NUTRITIONAL VALUE FOR LIVESTOCK

Serradella is described as highly palatable for cattle, sheep, goats and horses. It can retain useful feed value when grazed green, dried, or conserved as hay or silage. Actual feed value depends on growth stage, weather and harvest management.

FLOWERING-STAGE CRUDE PROTEIN

15–25%

DRY-MATTER DIGESTIBILITY

65–75%

SOIL AND ROOT FUNCTION

Deep roots can access water and nutrients below the surface layer while supporting aeration, water retention and soil stability. Established plants are reported as drought tolerant, but heavy clay and persistently waterlogged conditions should be avoided.

PEST AND DISEASE RESPONSE

The supplied fact sheet reports moderate resistance to red-legged earth mites, blue-green aphids and cowpea aphids; susceptibility to lucerne fleas and native budworms; and general tolerance to collar and root rot except under severe pressure. Confirm these responses for the marketed cultivar and local pest complex.

IMPORTANT AGRONOMIC GUIDANCE

- Rates differ among dehulled seed, hulled seed and in-pod material; the product label and current seed lot govern final calibration.
- The new supplier sheet uses a 450 mm rainfall minimum and pH 4–7; other regional references may use narrower or cultivar-specific guides.
- The supplier narrative cites 16–24% crude protein; its summary table reports 15–25% at flowering. Both are source-specific references.
- Avoid heavy clay or prolonged waterlogging even though some cultivars may tolerate short periods of wet soil.
- Feed, pest and disease values are source-specific references—not universal performance guarantees.

TECHNICAL BASIS

Technical basis: Cape Seed and Horn Enterprises — French Serradella Fact Sheet for Farmers and Buyers (2024); NSW Department of Primary Industries — French serradella guide; Western Australia DPIRD — serradella research; GRDC — French serradella in cover-crop and crop-pasture systems.