

Mike Simpson overseeds up to 160ha (400 acres) of pasture land each year for his customers.



CASE STUDY

Mike Simpson

BLANDFORD, DORSET

* Contractor, Mike Simpson reckons to overseed up to 160ha (400 acres) of pasture land each year for customers and says that, with only one or two exceptions, the operation is normally successful.

Operating out of Winterborne Kingston, Blandford, Dorset, Mr Simpson emphasises that it is not a system which suits all situations but believes it can have an important role to play.

"In this part of the country there are large areas of pasture which cannot for one reason or another be ploughed and re-seeded," he says. "Estate parklands, steep terrain, small paddocks and so on, and there are those who simply cannot afford to have a pasture out of production for several months while a full re-seed is established."

Mr Simpson offers a choice of two systems: a slot-seed and an overseed using a grass harrow seeder.

The slot-seeder is a Moore Unidrill which uses angled discs to cut the slot into which the seed is placed; the design of the drill allows significant pressure to be applied to the discs and ensure adequate soil penetration in most conditions.

"I would use the slot-seeder where the existing pasture is particularly matted," he says. "In these conditions it's essential to get the incoming seed in contact with the soil and create a path for it to grow through."

If the pasture is more open though, his choice is to use his harrow-type seeder which is based on a Dalbo triple flat roller unit he purchased a few years ago.

"I fitted a set of tines to run in front of the water ballasted rolls and bolted an Opico pneumatic seeder unit on to the main frame which broadcasts the grass seed from five delivery points along the tine-bar," he explains.

With a working width of 6m and a transport width of 2.5m this unit, he considers, has the ability to travel safely along Dorset's narrow lanes and also produce acceptable work rates in the field.

"This system is not soil dependent; it just tickles the top half-inch and rakes out any crop residues there may be. Sometimes we make two passes at right angles, not to improve the seed spread but to create a better tilth if there is some matting present."

Mr Simpson concedes that over seeding is just a top-up and not a re-seed – a way of introducing modern and more vibrant grass species which will respond better to fertiliser applications and hopefully increase production.

"It's an operation which can be done more than once," he says. "I have customers who I overseed their grassland perhaps every four or five years."

Mr Simpson says he charges about £35/ha to overseed which does not include the price of seed. This, he estimates would be less than half the cost of a plough/cultivate/drill operation.