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**A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEED VIGOUR
AND SEED PERFORMANCE IN TRIFOLIUM PRATENSE L.
CV. GRASSLANDS PAWERA**

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ABSTRACT

Significant differences in seed vigour within lots of red clover cv. Pawera, white clover cv. Huia and lucerne cv. Wairau were recorded in a preliminary experiment. Subsequently, 7 high viability Pawera seed lots were used to explore the relationship between seed vigour, as measured in the laboratory, and seed performance, both in the field and in storage. Four vigour testing techniques i.e. conductivity, accelerated aging (AA), controlled deterioration (CD) and speed of germination were employed. Results for standard germination (SG) and each of the vigour tests were related to seed performance by correlation analysis. Field performance was monitored for 6 seed lots, sown at 8 dates through spring and autumn. Seed storability was determined by measuring the viability of 4 seed lots under 5 storage conditions (including ambient open storage and simulated temperate controlled storage :20 °C, 45% to 90% RH) over a total of 11 months. The effects of mechanical damage, thousand seed weight, imbibition rate and storage fungi on seed viability and vigour were also investigated and seed quality changes during storage were monitored.

The vigour rankings found in the laboratory were consistent with those for field emergence, emergence rate over the 8 sowings and performance during storage. Low vigour lots also showed a significant reduction in seedling dry weight for the autumn sowings when soil temperatures were very low.

Each of the four vigour techniques were able to provide more accurate parameters for predicting seed performances than the SG test. For predicting seed field emergence over all the sowings, the best result was provided by the CD test at either 16% or 18% seed moisture content ($r = 0.933$ and 0.911 resp.), followed by AA (2-day AA of surface sterilized seed) ($r = 0.840$) and conductivity ($r = -0.602$). For predicting seed storability, the best result was obtained from the CD test (at either 18% or 20% seed moisture content) for ambient storage conditions, and from both CD (either 18% or 20% seed moisture content) and AA (3-day aging) under controlled storage conditions. Correlation coefficients for vigour tests and storage performance tended to vary between storage periods.

Seeds which imbibed water rapidly (within 4h) were low in viability and vigour, but this was generally related to the extent of mechanical damage to the seed coat. Seed weight was not related to seed vigour.

Seed deterioration during storage was associated with increasing conductivity, abnormal seedlings and dead seed content, and decreasing germination rate, normal seedlings, and field emergence. Vigour was lost before viability. The deterioration rate was quicker at high RH (75 and 90% RH), since the seeds were quickly invaded by storage fungi.

The present experimental results strongly suggest that standard germination was a poor predictor of seed performance, both in the field and during storage. Both accelerated aging and controlled deterioration seem promising techniques for determining vigour of red clover seed lots. The further development of these vigour tests is discussed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
LIST OF PLATES	xvii
LIST OF APPENDICES	xviii
 CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	 1
 CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	 4
2.1 Seed vigour and vigour testing	4
2.1.1 Current concepts of seed vigour	4
2.1.1.1 ISTA concept of vigour	4
2.1.1.2 AOSA concept of vigour	4
2.1.1.3 Discussion of the two concepts	5
2.1.2 Factors influencing vigour potential	5
2.1.2.1 Genetic effect	5
2.1.2.2 Conditions during seed development	6
2.1.2.3 Techniques of seed harvesting and processing	10
2.1.2.4 Deterioration during seed storage (or aging)	11
2.1.3 Methods of vigour testing	12
2.1.3.1 Requirements of a testing method	12
2.1.3.2 Characteristics of each type of method	13
2.1.3.3 Some individual vigour testing methods	15

2.1.4	Vigour and field emergence	22
2.1.4.1	Relationship between standard germination, vigour tests, and field performance	22
2.1.4.2	Factors affecting the expression of vigour potential	23
2.2	Seed longevity and its prediction	26
2.2.1	Seed longevity in red clover	26
2.2.2	Factors affecting longevity	27
2.2.2.1	Seed initial quality	27
2.2.2.2	Storage environment	31
2.2.2.3	Storage fungi	33
2.2.3	Predicting the relative storability of seed lots	35
2.2.3.1	Standard germination and seed relative storability	35
2.2.3.2	Seed vigour and relative storability	36
2.3	Red clover cv. Grasslands Pawera	38
2.3.1	Taxonomy, origin and distribution	38
2.3.2	Importance in agriculture	38
2.3.3	Seed	39
CHAPTER 3	MATERIALS AND METHODS	40
3.1	Preliminary experiment	40
3.1.1	Moisture content	40
3.1.2	Standard germination	40
3.1.3	Thousand seed weight	41
3.1.4	Accelerated aging	41
3.2	Main experiment	41
3.2.1	Laboratory quality assessment	42
3.2.1.1	Moisture content	42
3.2.1.2	1000-seed weight	42
3.2.1.3	Standard germination	42
3.2.1.4	Mechanical damage	42

3.2.1.5 Imbibition rate	42
3.2.1.6 Storage fungi	42
3.2.1.7 Electrical conductivity	43
3.2.1.8 Accelerated aging test	43
3.2.1.9 Controlled deterioration	44
3.2.1.10 Germination rate	44
3.2.2 Field performance trial	45
3.2.2.1 Final emergence and emergence rate	45
3.2.2.2 Seedling length and dry weight	46
3.2.3 Storage test	46
3.3 Statistical analyses	47
 CHAPTER 4 LABORATORY QUALITY ASSESSMENTS	 48
 4.1 Preliminary experiment	 48
4.1.1 Seed moisture content	48
4.1.2 Thousand seed weight	48
4.1.3 Standard germination	48
4.1.4 Seed vigour	48
 4.2 Main experiment	 53
4.2.1 Seed moisture content	53
4.2.2 Thousand seed weight	53
4.2.3 Mechanically damaged seed	53
4.2.4 Storage fungi	53
4.2.5 Standard germination	53
4.2.6 Imbibition rate	54
4.2.7 Seed vigour	56
4.2.7.1 Conductivity	56
4.2.7.2 Accelerated aging	56
4.2.7.3 Controlled deterioration	59
4.2.7.4 Germination rate	62
4.2.8 Relationship between standard germination, vigour and several seed physical characteristics	62

CHAPTER 5 QUALITY CHANGES DURING STORAGE	64
5.1 Seed moisture content	64
5.2 Storage fungi content	64
5.3 Standard germination	68
5.3.1 Normal seedlings	68
5.3.2 Four-day count	72
5.3.3 Abnormal seedlings	72
5.3.4 Hard seed	72
5.3.5 Dead seed	72
5.4 Conductivity	79
5.5 Quality changes from spring to autumn	79
 CHAPTER 6 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEED VIGOUR AND SEED PERFORMANCE	 84
6.1 Relationship between vigour and field emergence	84
6.1.1 Field performance	84
6.1.1.1 Field emergence	84
6.1.1.2 Emergence rate	84
6.1.1.3 Seedling length and dry weight	84
6.1.2 Vigour tests and field emergence	89
6.1.2.1 Standard germination	89
6.1.2.2 Seed weight	89
6.1.2.3 Damaged seed	89
6.1.2.4 Conductivity	89
6.1.2.5 Accelerated aging	92
6.1.2.6 Controlled deterioration	92
6.1.2.7 Germination rate	92
6.1.2.8 Predicting field emergence by the best vigour tests	95

6.2 Relationship between vigour and storability	98
6.2.1 Storage at 20 °C-45% RH	98
6.2.2 Storage at 20 °C-60% RH	98
6.2.3 Storage at ambient conditions	98
6.2.4 Storage at 20 °C-75% RH and 20 °C-90% RH	98
6.2.5 Predicting storability at ambient conditions by vigour testing	103
 CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION	 106
 7.1 Seed vigour and seed quality	 106
7.1.1 Differences in vigour of seed lots	106
7.1.2 Seed vigour and its relationship to other seed quality parameters	107
 7.2 Evaluation of vigour methods	 108
7.2.1 Individual techniques	109
7.2.1.1 Conductivity	109
7.2.1.2 Accelerated aging (AA)	110
7.2.1.3 Controlled deterioration	111
7.2.1.4 Speed of germination	112
7.2.2 Promising techniques	112
 7.3 Some aspects of the sequence of changes during seed deterioration	 115
7.3.1 General aspects of seed deterioration	115
7.3.2 Factors affecting seed deterioration	116
 CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION	 119
 REFERENCE S	 122
 APPENDICES	 141

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
2-1 Effects of seed size on field performance in large and small seeded legumes	9
2-2 The equilibrium moisture content of alsike, red and white clover seed at different relative humidities and approximately 25 °C	32
2-3 Minimum relative humidity for the growth of common storage fungi at their optimum temperature for growth (26 - 30 °C)	34
2-4 Approximate minimum, optimum, and maximum temperatures for growth of common storage fungi	35
2-5 Comparison of germination percentage among seed lots of two herbage species under the same storage conditions	36
2-6 Optimum accelerated aging conditions and treatment times for predicting seed relative storability of some small seeded forage legume	38
3-1 The proportion of water and glycerine required to maintain the different levels of RH at 20 °C	47
4-1 Seed moisture content (SMC), 1000-seed weight (TSW), and percentage germination before (SG) and after 72-hour accelerated aging (AA) in 17 lucerne, red clover and white clover seed lots	49
4-2 Results of tests for seed moisture content (SMC), 1000-seed weight (TSW), mechanical damage (MD), storage fungi (SF), standard germination (SG) and imbibition rate (IR) in 7 red clover cv. Pawera seed lots	54

4-3	Germination percentage (%) after different periods of accelerated aging in 7 red clover cv. Pawera seed lots	58
4-4	Effects of surface sterilization on germination after different periods of accelerated aging in 7 red clover cv. Pawera seed lots	58
4-5	Germination percentage measured for both normal seedlings and radicle appearance after controlled deterioration in 7 red clover cv. Pawera seed lots	60
4-6	Germination rate (GR) of 4 red clover cv. Pawera seed lots at different temperatures	62
4-7	Correlation coefficient of standard germination (SG), seed vigour (AA2, CD16) with thousand seed weight (TSW), mechanical damage (MD) and imbibition rate (IR4, IR4-6) in 7 seed lots	63
5-1	Incidence (%) of main storage fungi in Pawera seed lots stored for 11 months at different relative humidities	66
5-2	Normal seedlings (%) following germination of Pawera seed lots stored for 11 months at different relative humidities	71
5-3	Abnomal seedlings (%) after germination of 4 Pawera seed lots stored for 11 months at different relative humidities	76
5-4	Hard seed (%) after germination of 4 Pawera seed lots stored for 11 months at different relative humidities	77
5-5	Dead seed (%) after germination of 4 Pawera seed lots stored for 11 months at different relative humidities	78
5-6	Quality changes in 7 Pawera seed lots after storage at 5 °C and under ambient conditions for 7 months	83

6-1	Field emergence (%) of 6 Pawera seed lots at 8 sowing dates	85
6-2	Field emergence rate of 6 Pawera seed lots at 8 sowing dates	85
6-3	Seedling length and dry weight of 6 Pawera seed lots at 8 sowing dates	86
6-4	Field environment during seedling emergence and growth	87
6-5	Correlation coefficient of standard germination, 1000-seed weight, and mechanical damage with field emergence in 6 Pawera seedlots at 8 sowing dates	90
6-6	Correlation coefficient between conductivity results and field emergence in 6 Pawera seed lots at 8 sowing dates	91
6-7	Correlation coefficient between germination after accelerated aging and field emergence in 6 Pawera seed lots at 8 sowing dates	93
6-8	Correlation coefficient between germination after controlled deterioration and field emergence in 6 Pawera seed lots at 8 sowing dates	94
6-9	Correlation coefficient between germination rate and field emergence in 4 Pawera seed lots at 8 sowings	95
6-10	Summary of the best vigour tests i.e. those were which highly correlated ($r^2 > 0.30$, i.e. $r > 0.548$) to field emergence at least at 6 of the 8 sowings	96
6-11	Correlation coefficients between initial quality of 4 Pawera seed lots and germination after storage for different periods at 20 °C-45% RH	99
6-12	Correlation coefficients between initial quality of 4 Pawera	

seed lots and germination after storage for different periods at 20 °C-60% RH	100
6-13 Correlation coefficient for initial quality of 4 Pawera seed lots and germination after storage for different periods at ambient conditions	101
6-14 Correlation coefficient between initial quality of 4 Pawera seed lots and germination after storage for different periods at 20 °C-75% RH and 20 °C-90% RH	102
6-15 Summary of best vigour tests for predicting seed storability at ambient conditions	103

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
4-1 Standard germination after different periods of accelerated aging of 4 lucerne seed lots.	51
4-2 Standard germination after different periods of accelerated aging in red clover (A), and white clover (B).	52
4-3 Imbibition (rate per 2h) of 7 red clover cv. Pawera seed lots.	55
4-4 Conductivity of 7 red clover cv. Pawera seed lots after different periods of soaking.	57
5-1 Moisture content of Pawera seed lots after storage at different relative humidities (RH)	65
5-2 Storage fungi content of Pawera seed lots after storage at different relative humidities (RH)	65
5-3 Standard germination of 4 Pawera seed lots stored under conditions of 20 °C-45% RH (A), 20 °C-60% RH (B), and ambient (C).	69
5-4 Standard germination of 4 Pawera seed lots stored under conditions of 20 °C-75% RH (A), 20 °C-90% RH (B).	70
5-5 Four-day count of standard germination of 4 Pawera seed lots stored under conditions of 20 °C-45% RH (A), 20 °C-60% RH (B), and ambient (C).	73
5-6 Four-day count of standard germination of 4 Pawera seed lots	

stored under conditions of 20 °C-75% RH (A), 20 °C-90% RH (B).	74
5-7 Conductivity of 4 Pawera seed lots stored at 20 °C-45% RH.	80
5-8 Conductivity of 4 Pawera seed lots stored at 20 °C-60% RH (A), and ambient (B).	81
5-9 Conductivity of 4 Pawera seed lots stored at 20 °C-75% RH.	82
6-1 Relationship between AA ₂ (1), AASS ₂ (2), CD16 (3), and CD18 (4), and field emergence averaged across the 8 sowings.	97
6-2 Relationship between conductivity and seed storability at ambient conditions for 7 months (1), and 11 months (2).	104
6-3 Relationship between AA ₃ and seed storability at ambient conditions for 7 months (1), and 11 months (2).	104
6-4 Relationship between CD18 and seed storability at ambient conditions for 7 months (1), and 11 months (2).	105
6-5 Relationship between CD20 and seed storability at ambient conditions for 7 months (1), and 11 months (2).	105

LIST OF PLATES

PLATE	PAGE
1. Standard germination (4-day count) for seed lots 3 and 4	61
2. Germination (4-day count) following controlled deterioration at 18 % seed moisture content	61
3. Seed infected with a <u>Aspergillus glaucus</u> following storage at 20 °C-75% RH for 5 months	67
4. Seed infected with a <u>Penicillium</u> sp. following storage at 20 °C-90% RH for 2 months	67
5. Germination (4-day count) after storage under ambient conditions and at 20 °C-45% RH for 3 months	75
6. Field emergence of a low vigour (lot 3) and high vigour (lot 4) seed lot	88
7. Seedling size for a low vigour (lot 3) and high vigour (lot 4) seed lot , 5 weeks after sowing in autumn	88

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDICES

	PAGE
1. Seed moisture content (%) of 4 Pawera seed lots stored for 11 months at different relative humidities	141
2. Storage fungi content of 4 Pawera seed lots stored for 11 months at different relative humidities	142