

Forage Grass Notes

Tall Fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*)

Meadow Fescue (*Festuca elatior*)



Introduction

- Is a deep-rooted, cool season perennial grass
- Has a very wide range of adaptation
- Has appearance of a bunchgrass, but is a tufted bunch
- Survives trampling and compaction better than most species
- Tall fescue has good drought tolerance and will survive during dry periods in a dormant state

Growth and Morphology

- Grows well on more acidic soils
- Does best with ample moisture, does well on moderate to poorly drained soils
- Very short rhizomes
- Dark green, shiny, ribbed leaves, barbed at the margins
- Branched panicle type head
- Long lived
- Deep tough extensive root system

Culture & Management

- 2/3 of its growth occurs in the spring
- Growth will cease in mid-summer under drought and heat
- Excellent fall growth, resistant to frost, good for stockpiling
- Highest yields obtained by rotational grazing down to a stubble height of 5 cm (however will tolerate continuous grazing more than most tall growing grasses) (10t/ha DM)
- Nutritive value improves if grazed closely - nutritive value highest in the fall, lowest in mid-summer

- Water soluble carbohydrate levels increase in the fall, while lignin and cellulose levels stay the same
- Animal performance varies from study to study
- Generally gains per animal and per ha are good - some concern over palatability with tall fescue

Meadow Fescue - *Festuca elatior*

- Perennial, bunch grass
- Often confused with tall fescue, however, not as robust - less chromosomes
- It was not until the 1950's that the species were seen as separate
- More winter hardy than tall fescue
- Less palatable and usually shorter lived than brome or timothy
- Large auricles
- Responds well to nitrogen fertilizer - 3 applications of N at 50 kg/ha for pasture
- Carbohydrates are stored at the base of the plant. This is important for winter survival - best to go into winter with 6 - 8" or 15 - 20 cm of growth. This will maximize carbohydrate storage while preventing smothering
- Meadow fescue is often sown as a pasture species in the following mixture: meadow fescue 15 kg/ha, timothy 6 kg/ha and white clover 2 kg/ha

For more information, please contact:

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