

Forage Grass Notes

Smooth Bromegrass (*Bromus inermis*)



Introduction

- Smooth bromegrass is the most widely used of the cultivated brome grasses
- Long lived perennial grass native to Europe and Asia, introduced to Canada in 1888
- Is a leafy, sod-forming perennial grass that is best suited for hay or early spring pasture

Growth and Morphology

- Excellent winter hardiness and drought resistance
- Extensive root system
- Spreads vegetatively by numerous slender rhizomes
- Leaf has a “M” marking midway between base and tip
- Grows best on deep fertile soils; moderately to well drained silt or clay loams

Importance and Use

- Brome grass most often recommended in a mix with alfalfa
- Also grown with red clover
- Will not compete with the legume in the mixture (if not fertilized with nitrogen)
- Very winter hardy species good for hay and silage
- Two cut system gives optimum yield
- Yield of 8 tonnes/ha possible on two cuts
- Good palatability, CP content 12 - 20%
- Holds quality better than most other grasses
- Commonly used for erosion control along ditch banks and dykes

Culture and Management

- A moist, fertile, firm seed bed is important for good establishment
- Plant early spring or late summer for best establishment
- Recommended seeding rate of 11 kg/ha
- Often seeded in a mixture with alfalfa (11 kg/ha bromegrass plus 11 kg/ha alfalfa)
- Best for a two cut, not a three cut system
- Under a three cut system persistence can suffer
- Slow recovery following cutting (reason: most or all tiller apices are removed by cutting, re-growth must therefore come from buds on underground nodes)
- Bromegrass does not produce seed heads after first growth but remains vegetative through summer and fall (therefore quality of re-growth similar to spring boot stage)
- Bromegrass requires regular nitrogen when not grown with a legume
- High nitrogen prevents sod bound condition - 100-160 kg N/ha per season
- The nitrogen applied from the legume keeps the grass productive, but not overly aggressive
- Phosphorous is very important as well, potassium not as important

For more information, please contact:

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