

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**

Landowner \_\_\_\_\_

**Bahiagrass in Conservation Farming****WHAT IS BAHIAGRASS?**

Bahiagrass is an aggressive, deep-rooted, warm-seasoned, sod-forming, perennial grass. It has short, stout stolons and almost leafless seed and stems that usually end in two seed-bearing branches. The two varieties are Pensacola and Wilmington.

**PURPOSES**

It is an excellent plant to use in sod-based cropping systems, erosion control, grazing, hay, and seed production. Bahiagrass seed is choice feed for quail, wild turkey, etc. Deer also graze bahiagrass.

**WHERE THE PRACTICE APPLIES**

Pensacola is best suited to the eastern portion of the state in areas of more than 38 inches annual rainfall.

It will grow on most soils except those of high alkaline or salt content. It is best suited to the medium-textured soils that are moderately to well-drained. It will not do well on extremely wet soils. While it responds favorably to moderate levels of fertility, it is also adapted to soils of low native fertility.

**WHERE TO GET HELP**

For further information, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service or Conservation District Office.

**APPLYING THE PRACTICE****PLANTING:**

Time: March 1 to June 30; August 1 to September 30.

Rate: For pasture, hay, wildlife, recreation, and conservation cropping system, plant 15 to 25 pounds of good quality seed per acre. Plant 30 to 50 pounds of seed per acre on gullied areas, spillways, waterways, roadbanks, dams, and levees.

Method: Whirlwind, Easy-Flow, or grass drills distribute the seed uniformly over the soil surface. Seed can be broadcast and covered with disc and smoothed with a drag harrow.

Depth: Cover seed  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches deep.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

A clean, firm seedbed is essential for good stand. Plowing should be done a month or so preceding the seeding of bahiagrass to allow for soil settling. Disking or harrowing may be necessary immediately before planting to remove competitive vegetation.

**FERTILIZER AND LIME:** Use soil test information to determine the need for lime and fertilizer. In lieu of local information or soil test, before planting, apply 200 pounds of 20-20-20 (or equivalent) fertilizer per acre on soils of low fertility. Bahiagrass has a low calcium requirement and liming is rarely required unless companion legumes are planted or lime is needed for maximum economic yield and improve the conservation cropping system.

**MAINTAINING THE PRACTICE**

**Pasture:** Competition from weeds and other grasses should be controlled by mowing and moderate grazing during the first year. With continuous grazing system maintain minimum average top growth of about 3 inches. In a rotational grazing system, grass may be grazed to a minimum average height of about 2 inches. Mow or spray to control weeds. For additional forage during the spring and summer, apply 25 to 40 pounds of nitrogen at 4 to 6 week intervals when the soil moisture is adequate.

**Hay:** Cut for hay just before seed heads are formed, or immediately after seeds are harvested.

**Seed Production:** Graze or mow residue as close as possible before spring growth begins. Apply 100 pounds of actual nitrogen when spring growth begins. Exclude grazing until after last seed crop is harvested in one season. The first seed crop is usually the most productive and the best quality seed. Combine direct when about one-half of the seed heads are mature. Yields average 200 to 300 pounds of seed per acre. Dry seed immediately after harvesting by spreading not more than 8

inches deep and stirring at least once a day to prevent heating.

**Crop Rotation:** Use in sod-based conservation cropping system. Plant 1 or 2 years of row crops following 2 or more years of bahiagrass.

**Erosion Control:** Can be used in waterways, spillways, dams, gullied areas, roadbanks, and levees. Regulate grazing during establishment period to control competing grasses. Exclude livestock when soil is extremely wet. Apply nitrogen to maintain effective ground cover. Don not graze closer than three inches.

**Wildlife:** Graze moderately plantings made for wildlife food.

**Recreation:** Mow to about 2 inches above the ground.

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