



Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Across America

Pasture Planting

Job Sheet – 512



Texas A&M Grass Images, Bioinformatics Working Group; Photo from Forages 5th Ed. CD Companion.

ANNUAL RYEGRASS

DESCRIPTION Most popular cool season annual grass used for grazing in Texas, primarily due to its ease of establishment.

CULTIVARS Common or Italian ryegrass, as it is sometimes called, is the type of ryegrass that volunteers in many pastures. Released cultivars have been selected for cold tolerance, maturity, and disease resistance. For example, Gulf has average cold tolerance, while TAM 90, Jackson, and Surrey have good cold tolerance, and all 4 have good resistance to crown rust. Marshall has excellent cold tolerance, but poor crown rust resistance.

ADAPTATION Ryegrass is best adapted to areas of Texas that receive greater than 25 inches of rainfall annually. It is adapted to a wide range of soil textures, and it is the only cool season annual grass that is adapted to poorly drained sites.

PLANTING DATES Optimum Planting dates September 1-October 15 on prepared seedbed, September 15-November 30 for over seeded, depending on location.

PLANTING RATE 12 lb PLS/ac

PLANTING DEPTH 0 to 1/4 inch deep

SEEDBED PREPARATION For a prepared seedbed, disk 3-4 inches deep, allow to firm from rainfall or by rolling. For over seeding, graze or cut perennial warm season grass sod to about a 2 inch height just prior to planting. Lightly disking sod before planting will increase seed/soil contact and may result in quicker establishment.

LIME AND FERTILIZER Optimum pH is 5.7 or higher. It will survive on more acid soils, but production will be limited. Nitrogen (N) application will vary depending upon planting date, planting method, site conditions, and intensity of management. For over seeded ryegrass a split application of 40 Lb/Ac N at planting,

and 40 Lb/Ac N in January and in March will be adequate for moderate production. If planting with clover, the N application at planting is optional, but the January and March applications are usually needed to maximize ryegrass production in the spring. Nitrogen application for ryegrass planted on a prepared seedbed should be split with about 60-70 Lb/Ac N at planting, and an additional application of 50-70 Lb/Ac N in January and in March, depending on the intensity of grazing management and site productivity. Other nutrients should be added, as needed, according to a current soil test.

PLANTING METHODS - Ryegrass can be no-till drilled into or overseeded on short perennial warm season grass sod. Often, the seed is mixed with the initial fertilizer treatment and broadcast in one application. After broadcasting the seed, going over the pasture with some sort of drag to shake the seed down through the sod will usually result in a better stand. A light disking of the sod right before the planting can help reduce competition from the warm season grass and increase seed to soil contact. The most reliable planting method, and usually the method that results in the highest production, is to drill or broadcast the ryegrass in a prepared seedbed. Then roll to firm after planting.

MANAGEMENT In most years, grazing will begin in November on early planted stands, regardless of the planting method. Make sure the plants are well rooted before grazing begins. If a large number of plants are pulled out during the initial grazing, remove the cattle until conditions improve. Minimum grazing height of 2-3 inches is recommended. Late planted stands may not produce any grazing until January. Pastures may need to be idled in mid-January or February if forage availability is limited due to cold temperatures and cloudy conditions. Best hay is harvested at early bloom stage.

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