

Are there many differences between ryegrass varieties?

There are a number of good ryegrass varieties on the market, but they are not all the same. There are differences in maturity dates, cold tolerance, disease resistance and yield. All of these traits are important, but perhaps none more than maturity date. Maturity is important because it determines how long the plant remains vegetative. Once seedheads begin to develop, ryegrass forage quality quickly declines. Maturity dates among ryegrass varieties can vary by three weeks or more. Where ryegrass is used for grazing, later maturing varieties extend the availability of high quality forage longer into the spring. Farmers harvesting ryegrass for hay or silage may wish to choose varieties of slightly different maturities so as to widen the window of optimum harvest quality.

Which winter annual grass is best to use?

When choosing which winter annual(s) to plant, seasonal forage availability should be considered. Generally speaking, small grains like wheat or rye are more tolerant to colder temperatures than ryegrass and thus will produce more forage during the colder months of the year. Ryegrass produces more total pounds of forage, but most of its production occurs during the warmer late winter and spring months. Ryegrass also remains productive later into the spring than small grains. Some producers mix a small grain and ryegrass together similar to Pennington's Supergraze annual forage mixture to even out the seasonal forage slumps and extend the number of grazing days. Producers should consider the number and timing of grazing days needed and select winter annual forages accordingly.

How much forage growth should grain rye have before initiating grazing?

Small grain pastures may be limit grazed once the forage reaches 5-8" in height. To facilitate forage re-growth, do not graze below a 3 inch height. If the rye is planted on a prepared seed bed (plowed ground), avoid grazing when the ground is excessively wet to prevent hoof pugging damage to the plants.