

Spring Green *Festulolium*

Festulolium is an interspecific hybrid between Italian ryegrass and meadow fescue. It has the nutritive, palatability, and digestive qualities of ryegrass, while maintaining the durability and drought resistance of meadow fescue.

Spring Green has been specifically bred for cold tolerance. The Relative Feed Value compares favorably with tetraploid ryegrass and is superior to other grass species. Its main advantage over ryegrass is the ability to continue production longer under high summer temperatures. Since Spring Green germinates in about a week under suitable conditions, it provides cover quickly, avoiding erosion problems. Spring Green mixes well with other grasses and legumes in a pasture, and responds well to nitrogen fertilization.

History

Spring Green Festulolium was bred by Dr. Michael Casler, University of Wisconsin, and Peter G. Pitts, Wisconsin beef grazer. Selections were made from pastures that had survived five or more years of the harsh winters and drought ridden summers of the 1980's. These selections were cold tolerant tested under extreme conditions at the University of Wisconsin's Biotron. These selections overwhelmingly surpassed the other varieties in these experiments and were crossed to produce Spring Green Festulolium.

Application

Spring Green is recommended for silage, direct feeding or grazing. It has excellent potential for use in combination with legumes as hay or as silage. Because of its interspecific qualities, Spring Green can be considered a short rotation forage grass that should last two to three years. Its ability to produce longer into the summer is a key factor.

Management Tips

After establishment Spring Green should be grazed starting at about 6 inches in height. Animals should be removed from the pasture after the stubble is grazed to about 3 inches in height. It is important to mow or graze Spring Green in the leafy and vegetative stage. Like ryegrasses, Spring Green reacts well to nitrogen fertilizer. For proper fertilization a soil test is recommended. In general 150 lbs of N per acre per year is a good rule of thumb, with 30% applied in the spring. The balance should be evenly split and applied after each harvesting.

Comparative Forage Nutritive Values of Perennial Grass Cultivars

Cultivar of Species	ADF%	NDF%	RFV
Per. Ryegrass	27.7	48.9	133.2
Festulolium	27.9	50.0	131.2
Orchardgrass	32.1	58.4	110.9
Canarygrass	31.5	59.3	109.8
Tall Fescue	32.1	57.6	112.1
Alfalfa	23.7	31.8	163.1

Source: 2 year mean – Perennial Grass Nutritional Value Study. Data collected by Dr. M. Casler, University of Wisconsin

Features

- ▶ Selected for cold tolerance
- ▶ Germinates quickly
- ▶ Good palatability
- ▶ Bunch type grass
- ▶ Improved drought resistance
- ▶ Good spring growth

Benefits

- ▶ Good winter survival
- ▶ Rapid establishment
- ▶ Improved animal intake
- ▶ Good companion for legume
- ▶ More feed under adverse condition
- ▶ Good supply of early feed

Seeding Rate

- ▶ Spring Green should be sown in a firm seedbed. The seeds should be planted at a depth of approx. 0.25 to 0.5 inch once adequate moisture is present
- ▶ A seed rate of 25 to 30 lbs is recommended
- ▶ In mixtures with legumes a lower rate of 15 to 20 lbs can be applied
- ▶ Most common reasons for poor pasture establishment are poor weed control, poor seedbed preparation, and dry soils

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