

Foraging Around



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ANNUAL FORAGES - ANOTHER LOOK

Some call them emergency forage crops. Others call them supplemental forage crops. In either case, they're referring to that group of warm season summer annuals (mainly grasses) that can be planted in late May and June and will produce an abundance of forage in as little as six to eight weeks. These warm weather annual crops are generally not ideal for hay, but among the annuals, there are crops that make excellent supplemental pasture, green chop or silage. And they are heat tolerant and very productive when moisture and fertility are adequate.

Here's a run-down on your choices for this year.

Multi-Harvest Annuals

Of the warm season summer annual grasses, the *sudangrasses*

have the finest stems and are usually higher in digestibility than the sudan-sorghum hybrids at comparable stages of growth. However, they are usually lower yielding. *Piper* sudangrass is still the most widely grown variety. It is the lowest in prussic acid potential and is normally the choice for pasture. However, sudangrass can be made as hay if drying conditions are favorable.

Sudangrass hybrids produce somewhat more forage than *Piper* but also may have slightly greater prussic acid potential. However, this difference is small and with good management the sudangrass hybrids are fine for summer pasture as well as green chop and silage.

Sudangrass-sorghum hybrids, such as Beachley-Hardy's RS II, are usually much higher yielding

than *Piper* and are used mostly in a green chop or silage situation. They have coarser stems and do have a higher prussic acid potential than *Piper*, and must be managed more carefully during the summer and fall.

These multi-harvest, warm season annual grasses can be planted in late May or June and will usually be ready for grazing or green chop about six to seven weeks after planting. They can be no-till seeded in stubble or sod, or drill planted on a prepared seedbed. In the absence of a soil test 50 to 75 pounds each of N, P₂O₅ and K₂O worked into the seedbed before planting is desirable. In general, seeding rates of 30-35 pounds per acre for the sudangrasses or 35-45 pounds per acre for the sudan-sorghum hybrids are adequate. If you plant a sudan-sorghum hybrid specifically for silage a mixture of soybeans (90 lbs. per acre) and the hybrid (25 lbs. per acre) can be used.

Piper sudangrass can be grazed when it reaches a height of 18" with no danger of prussic acid -- a two-foot height is recommended for sudangrass hybrids. If properly fertilized and managed these crops can normally be grazed two or three times during the growing season. The sudan-sorghum hybrids should reach a height of 2½ - 3 feet before grazing or chopping. At earlier stages, the forage will be higher in quality but may contain unsafe levels of prussic acid. If cut at a stubble height of five to six inches they will recover rapidly for a second crop.

If harvested for direct-cut silage these crops should be allowed to

reach the early head to early bloom stage of growth. If harvested for silage at more immature stages wilting is desirable. While hay made from these crops harvested at the more immature stage is fair to good in quality, field curing can be a serious problem; thus the use of a hay conditioner is essential.

Sudangrass is generally superior to the millets except on cold, poorly drained soils where Japanese Millet seeded at the rate of 15 pounds per acre is occasionally used for pasture, green chop or hay. This millet, however, produces little or no aftermath growth.

One Cut Annuals

The drought and heat tolerant forage sorghums grown alone or with soybeans can be grown for

silage in place of corn. Under favorable growing conditions adapted corn hybrids harvested as silage are said to yield slightly more feed per acre. However, the sorghums are more drought resistant and less subject to damage from deer where deer feeding on corn is a problem. When grown alone, row plant at the rate of 8 to 12 pounds per acre. Fertilize as for corn. If grown with soybeans use 90 pounds per acre of beans and 6 to 8 pounds of sorghum. Harvest for silage when the sorghum is in the soft to medium dough stage of growth.

It's too early to predict the moisture conditions for this summer. Thus planting some acreages to a summer annual could be a good hedge against the unknown.

Contest Tests Skills

DES MOINES, Iowa — Pork producers can try their hand at evaluating a hog's fat thickness and muscling by participating in the Lean Value Contest sponsored by "Hogs Today" magazine during World Pork Expo June 2-4 at the Iowa State Fairgrounds.

Live hogs will be available for participants to judge from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. each day of the Expo in the Varied Industries Building. The Lean Value Contest gives adults and youth the opportunity to test their skills in ranking hogs for lean muscle traits.

The person who comes the closest to the actual backfat thickness and loin-eye area from all the animals will win a new pickup truck, compliments of Purina Mills, Inc.

Other prizes and their sponsors in the adult division are a manure tanker, Balzer Manufacturing Corporation; a Caribbean cruise, Smith-Kline Animal Health; a 100 foot flex auger system, Chore-Time Equipment Company; aluminum livestock gates, Sands Livestock Systems; and additional prizes, Walnut Grove.

Youth 18 years old and younger also can test their livestock evaluation skills and compete for 10 cash prizes that will be sponsored by Monsanto Agricultural Company. The first-prize winner in the youth division will be awarded \$500.

The results of the Lean Value Contest will be computed after the Expo, and the winners will be notified of their prizes.

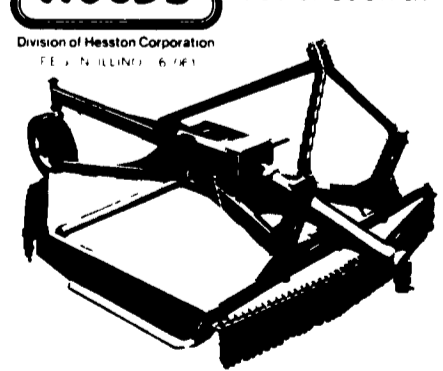
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