

## New Forage Genetics: Do They Work In The Northeast?

Many of the cool-season forages that we use today were brought to the U.S. by early European settlers. Variety development in the U.S. did not begin until the early 1900s. There were very few varieties available until the 1930s and 1940s when the USDA and universities put a major emphasis on variety development. Commercial forage breeding was initiated in the late '50s and '60s and rapidly expanded in the '70s and '80s.

While management is very important, improved varieties almost always pay for themselves in the long run. Here are some improvements that could improve your bottom-line.

• Orchardgrass. New varieties are coming on the market that have a low crown and dense, prostrate growth habit (less clumping). These varieties are better suited for

pastures than traditional varieties. They are not higher yielding, but improved quality and palatability generally result in improved performance.

• Perennial Ryegrass. There are diploid varieties and tetraploid varieties. Tetraploid varieties are usually higher yielding than diploids with larger leaves and tillers, less ground cover, more disease resistance and tend to have higher digestibility. Diploid types tend to have finer leaves, produce more tillers, have better stand persistence, and are more tolerant to heavy grazing.

• Italian Ryegrass. Stands survive up to two years. Italian ryegrass provides high yields of quality forage, shows quick regrowth, early spring growth, and late fall growth. It requires longer rest periods than perennial ryegrass for maximum production.

• Festulolium. This was developed from crosses between Italian ryegrass and meadow fescue. Festulolium combines the disease resistance and winter hardiness of meadow fescue with the high quality and season-long production of Italian ryegrass.

• Tall Fescue. Endophyte-free varieties have now been available for many years. These show dramatically in-

creased animal gains. Endophyte-free varieties are typically harder to establish and shorter-lived than endophyte-infected varieties. New endophyte-free varieties are being released that are longer-lived and more palatable. A new class of tall fescue is being developed that contains non-toxic or novel endophytes. Researchers have discovered endophytes

that do not produce toxins. In some cases they still produce alkaloids that help plant survival. One of these types of endophyte has been patented under the name MaxQ and has been put into different varieties.

— Information from  
Ray Smith  
Forage Extension Specialist  
Virginia Tech

### Empire State Pasture Day Set

TULLY, N.Y. — The Empire State Pasture Day is scheduled to take place Aug. 17 at the John Burgett Farm, Route 281, Tully, New York, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This large-scale, outdoor, onfarm event will focus on the numerous aspects associated with rotational grazing and pasture/hayland management. Activities for the day will include field demonstrations, displays, and pres-

entations. A variety of guest speakers will be presenting throughout the day on seasonal calving, crossbreeding, nutrition for different species on pasture, and multiple species grazing. Grazing and pasture related vendors will

be onsite for convenient product sampling and questions. Food vendors will be onsite. For further information regarding this event, go to [www.grazeny.com](http://www.grazeny.com) or call Broome County SWCD at (607) 724-9268.



#### Small Grains And Pea Mixtures For Alfalfa Establishment

Many Pennsylvania alfalfa producers have used or are considering the use of small grains and pea mixtures as a nurse crop during alfalfa establishment. Recent research at the University of Wisconsin was conducted to determine the effect of field pea mixtures on alfalfa establishment when seeded in mixtures with oat or barley. Sixteen oat and nine barley varieties were grown alone and in mixtures with 'Trapper' field pea to produce oat, oat-pea, barley and barley-pea nurse crops. The nurse crops were underseeded with 'Blazer' alfalfa.

No single oat or barley variety, whether mixed with pea or not, was superior in forage yield or forage quality. In addition, no variety affected alfalfa yield in the year after alfalfa establishment. Pea in the mixture also did not affect alfalfa yield in the establishment year or in the year after establishment.

The oat-pea forage mixture was lower in NDF and significantly higher in CP than the barley-pea forage mixture. The addition of pea to oat decreased neutral detergent fibers (NDF) by 7.1 percentage units and increased crude protein (CP) by 4.4 percentage units. Adding pea to barley decreased NDF by 6.2 percentage units and increased CP by 3.0 percentage units.

Although the barley-pea mixture was highest in forage yield, oat-pea mixtures were considered the best companion crop because they had superior forage quality.



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