

Forage Grass Notes

Perennial Ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*)



Introduction

- Perennial ryegrass is a cool season bunch grass
- High quality perennial, the choice for pasture where adapted – best adjusted to wet mild temperate climates (New Zealand and Great Britain)
- Perennial ryegrass can withstand considerable grazing management and remain productive

Growth and Morphology

- Root system is very fibrous, leaves are prominently ribbed on the upper side and shiny on the bottom
- Leaves are folded in the bud as compared to the fescues which are rolled in the bud
- Leaf sheaths are red to purple at the base
- Optimum growth occurs at temperatures 20°- 25°C
- Grows best on fertile, well-drained soils - does best on soil with pH 6 -7
- Much less persistent than orchardgrass, meadow fescue, timothy or brome grass - susceptible to winter kill and crown rust- major reasons why its not more highly utilized in Eastern Canada

Importance and Use

- Considered a premier quality grazing species
- Perennial ryegrass has greater dry matter digestibility than other temperate perennial grass species
- Produces good dairy pasture, though excellent for all classes of livestock
- Graze between 20-25 cm tall down to 5 cm stubble - Yield and persistence better under rotational grazing
- Perennial ryegrass can also be harvested as silage or hay

- Rapid germination and quick establishment make it a preferred species for sod seeding where adapted

Culture and Management

- Recommended seeding rates are 7 kg/ha in mixture with 8 kg/ha meadow fescue, 3 kg/ha white clover and 5 kg/ha timothy for pasture
- Seed in early spring for best results
- Persistence is best under rotational grazing rather than continuous grazing
- Apply P&K based on soil test - Nitrogen should be applied in split applications at rates relative to legume content. Total seasonal N should not exceed 150 kg/ha per season on grass stands

For more information, please contact:

Bill Thomas
Forage Specialist
(902) 896-0277