

# Triticale Forage

## Yield and feed value compare to traditional cereal grains



livestock producers searching for a weight gain advantage may want to consider triticale as an alternative forage crop, says forage seed crop specialist Gerald Huebner with Manitoba Agriculture.

Researchers there recently tested the relative feed value and dry matter yields of triticale compared to barley, oats and wheat over two seasons in three separate locations. Huebner says the relative feed value of triticale ranged between 125 and 145, with a dry matter yield between 7,400 and 10,200 kilograms per hectare. Oats delivered results similar to triticale on dry matter yield, but relative feed value tested between 100 and 120.

Barley's relative feed value ranged from 100 to 140. However, it delivered some dry yields in excess of triticale. The relative feed value of wheat scored lower than triticale, barley or oats.

"Barley tended to out-yield triticale, but triticale had better quality," says Huebner. "It depends on what you want: quality or quantity. In terms of quality, I would tend to rate triticale the product of choice, then barley, oats, and last, wheat."

He says producers should be aware of the significant varietal differences within each grain species.



### GOOD GRAZING

At Kansas State University (KSU), researchers found that triticale for grazing was significantly superior to wheat, and Kansas farmers often use triticale as a corn replacement.

"Better adapted triticale varieties are becoming more available to farmers," says KSU researcher Dr. Jim Shroyer. "In the past, triticale varieties have not been particularly winter hardy, but that problem is being alleviated."

Both Huebner and Shroyer found that input costs for triticale are similar to other forage varieties. However, farmers can expect a higher triticale seeding rate compared to other cereal grains simply as a result of seed size.

"I would increase the triticale seeding rate," says Shroyer. "If you are normally planting 50 pounds of wheat for a grain crop in western Kansas, I would jump that to 60 to 75 pounds for graze-out. In central Kansas, I would go to 90 pounds." Check with your local forage experts for seeding rate recommendations for your area.

The downside of a higher seeding rate to produce forage is that the soil is quickly mined of nutrients. Shroyer says farmers should replenish the soil with nitrogen to maintain beneficial nutrient levels.

### REGROWTH

Huebner says regrowth in the range of a half to three-quarters of a ton per acre was realized in "virtually all the cereal crops" when test crops were harvested late in July. He points out that regrowth rates depend on factors such as moisture conditions.

Huebner says triticale is definitely one alternate forage crop, but there are others. "I would suggest producers also take a look at annual rye grass. It offers potential as a forage crop and a seed crop as well."

