

Ryegrass (Ch 6 pg 125-143)

Annual (*Lolium multiflorum* L.); Perennial (*Lolium perenne* L.); Hybrid (*Lolium hybridum* L.)

Background

- Ryegrass is a cool-season bunch grass
- Grown primarily in southern USA
- Seed production occurs in the western states from California to Canada.
- Both species are capable of surviving the summer in northern states but are susceptible to winter-kill.
- Primary use is for pastures.
- Can form hybrids with fescue family (tall fescue and meadow fescue) - called festulolium - and has traits intermediate between the hybridized species

Agronomy

- Ryegrass species are best adapted to well-drained soils
- Ryegrass will grow on soils to wet for small grain production and withstand short periods of flooding.
- Prefers silt to heavy clay soils compared to sandy well-drained soils.
- When high rates of N are applied, increased rates of P & K are also suggested.
- typically planted at 10-40 lb/ac (lower rates in mixes, higher rates for pure stands)
- old varieties: Gulf, Bison, Lim
- new varieties: Tonga, BG34, BG16, Mara, Boxer

Quality

- Ryegrass is considered to be of high quality with proper fertility.
- Digestibility is one of the highest of most forage crops
- Decreased quality will result after ryegrass has reached the anthesis.
- Cutting height should be no lower than 3” for good regrowth.

Diseases

Ryegrass is susceptible to many diseases including crown and brown rust, root rot and ergot where seed production occurs.

<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent winter and early spring grazing (in southern states). • Increases the quality of other forage crops when grown as a companion. • Increases the number of days for grazing livestock. • Adaptability to different soil types. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disease susceptibility • High fertility requirement when seeded alone and harvested for hay. • Susceptibility to winter-kill in northern states.

Identification

	<u>Annual</u>	<u>Perennial</u>
Ligule	membranous	membranous
Auricles	medium length	long
Sheath	sides overlapping (no hair)	sides overlapping (no hair)
Blade	rolled in shoot, underside glossy requires vernalization to flower	folded in shoot & glossy vernalization not required to flower