

Points to Ponder **Ed Heckman**

I have been a subscriber to the graze-I listserve for several years. As you might imagine, there have been many topics discussed by over eight hundred subscribers in this worldwide environment. Two of the topics follow.

A discussion about grasses in the Midwest created a number of comments. A summary of four grasses follows. This is meant to be a stimulus for your thinking. Have you had experience with three of the four so that you are able to relate to these rankings?

Perennial ryegrass (PRG), Orchardgrass, (OG), Tall fescue (TF), and Reed canarygrass (RC) were discussed and evaluated.

In terms of rate of establishment -- the order probably is PRG > TF > OG > RC

In terms of persistence -- the order probably is TF > RC > OG > PRG

In terms of first spring palatability -- the order probably is OG > PRG = TF > RC

In terms of overall palatability -- the order probably is PRG > OG > RC =TF

In terms of high nitrogen applications -- the order probably is RC > PRG> OG > TF

On well-grazed regrowth -- the order probably is OG > PRG> TF =RC

It was mentioned that varietal differences do exist within each species and that varieties will perform differently in various locations in the Midwest.

One grazier indicated that under his MIG system orchardgrass had invaded more tall fescue paddocks than vice versa.

So once again we are made aware that there is not one grass that has all the traits that we would like. Each grazier must look at the pasture resources and the management style in order to select the grass and accompanying legumes that fit the situation.

This article was meant to be a "thinking" piece and not a rigid evaluation of four grasses. Your responses and experiences would be welcome.

Pasture Species

Periodically a new grazier would inquire on the list serve. The most popular question would be, "I have this old permanent pasture that has had very little attention for six years. What should I seed in it?"

The common answer over the years involves the following points:

Subdivide into paddocks; in other words "build fence".

Lime is probably necessary; soil test for amounts of it, phosphorus and potassium to apply.

Graze some of the paddocks closely in order to create the correct environment for native forages to germinate and grow. Be ready to overseed with red clover and annual ryegrass.