

TRICAL® Forage Triticale

Triticale Pasture

Triticale is becoming the cool-season annual pasture of choice in many areas because of its superior combination of productivity, quality, and durability.

In research by New Mexico State University at Clovis in which clipping was used to simulate grazing, the best triticale produced significantly more forage than the best wheat in each of the eight years of the study, on average producing **23% more forage**.

Forage quality is essentially the same for triticale and wheat, but a well-chosen triticale can provide longer lasting pasture as well as significantly higher yield.

TRICAL® Tips – Keys to Successful Triticale Pasture

Select the Proper Variety

The most important step in successfully using triticale in a grazing program is to choose varieties of triticale that are well adapted for grazing in your area. There are literally hundreds of different varieties of triticale—some are for grain production while others are for forage; some are winter-hardy, while others will die out under severe winters; some are for fall planting, some for spring; some are excellent for grazing while others are poor. Varieties also differ in growth habit, forage production characteristics, adaptability, and pest tolerance. Some varieties produce more forage in the fall, while others produce more in spring. Therefore, blends of two or more varieties of triticale are commonly used in some areas to provide a more desirable balance of forage growth throughout the grazing season over a wide range of conditions.

Management Similar to Wheat Pasture

Triticale is a very close relative of common wheat, so local management practices for wheat pasture provide a good starting point for management of triticale pasture.

Plant During the Optimum Planting Window

Planting time for triticale is similar to that for wheat, but most triticale varieties bred for grazing tolerate the pests and environmental stress associated with early planting better than wheat, so are better suited than wheat for early planting. For example, in the Southern Plains and Pacific Northwest it is not unusual to plant a full-season, winter-type grazing triticale by mid August for fall grazing. In those two areas, planting in late August through early September is the most common planting time, but adapted varieties can be planted throughout the fall. The “optimum” planting date depends on crop rotation constraints and forage needs. If fall grazing is desired an early planting date is essential—obviously later planting greatly reduces fall growth. Spring-type varieties can be planted in the late winter or early spring, but forage production from spring planting rarely matches that from fall planting. A few producers and researchers are experimenting with planting winter-type triticale in the late spring or early summer in cool-summer locations to get pastures that produce for more than one year from one planting.

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Use Appropriate Planting Practices

Land preparation and planting depth should be similar to that for wheat. Most varieties of triticale can be successfully no-till seeded after summer crops or into declining stands of alfalfa or other forages. Seeding at 80 to 120 lbs per acre with a grain drill is typical, but seeding rate can vary depending on area, variety, planting date, and grazing program. Plant at a higher seeding rate to increase early-season forage production. Triticale typically has larger seed than wheat, so grain drills must be opened up wider to achieve the same seeding rate. Broadcast seeding requires 25% more seed and is a less reliable means of stand establishment. As with wheat, higher seeding rates increase fall forage production, but can lead to lodging if not grazed.

Adequate Fertility is Essential

Soil fertility has a major impact on forage production. Although triticale typically yields more than wheat even if soil nitrogen is low, it has a very high nitrogen response. Ongoing university research in the western intermountain area by Steve Orloff and Dan Drake indicates that forage yields continue to increase even at a total of 240 lbs of nitrogen spread over three application dates, preplant, February, and May. Triticale's other nutrient requirements are similar to that of wheat. However, because triticale forage yields are substantially higher than wheat, nutrient needs are accordingly higher. Use soil tests to guide fertility management.

Use Proper Grazing Management

Manage cattle on triticale pasture as you would on other cereal grain pasture. Rotational grazing with back fencing provides the best results. Allow plants to become well anchored and tillered, usually about 5 to 7 weeks after germination, when leaves of most varieties are 9 to 12 inches in length. If using a full-season, winter-type grazing triticale, be prepared for significantly larger quantity and longer duration of forage production in the spring than from wheat. Triticale forages have a proven record of excellent safety, but routine testing for nitrates and other content is advisable just as it is for other cereal grains.