



March 15, 2013

LINE UP FORAGE SORGHUM SEED NOW

There is no question we need a lot of recovery in our grass pastures. Pasture grasses depend on carbohydrate reserves in their root systems for early season growth. We enhance that growth with supplemental fertilizer.

With the weakened condition our pastures are in because of last summer's stress, it's not hard to imagine that come mid-summer we may need more pasture this year. One option for more summer pasture is to plant summer annual forage grasses like sorghum-sudangrass and millets.

Now is the time to line up your seed supply because the seed fields for these types of sorghums are mostly grown in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Colorado. Drought during the past couple years greatly reduced production and, as a result, the supply available for this summer.

Foxtail millet used in the Panhandle of Nebraska appears to be in shortest supply, most seed dealers already are sold out. The same situation exists for many varieties of sudangrass, sorghum-sudangrass hybrids, forage sorghums, and pearl millet. Seed of most of these varieties may be gone soon.

The bottom line is this: if you think you might want or need to plant some summer annual forage grasses this year after wheat, in regular cropland, or wherever, buy the seed now before it's all gone.

For pasture, sudangrass or pearl millet work well. Both are leafy, they regrow rapidly, and they contain less danger from prussic acid poisoning than other annual grasses.

For hay or green chop, select sorghum-sudan hybrids or pearl millet because they yield well and they have good feed value when cut two or three times. Oats is a good option and planted now can usually give us one good hay cutting and oats is relatively cheap.

For a drought tolerant silage, then choose the forage sorghums, especially hybrids with high grain production and the brown mid rib trait. They can't be beat for tonnage or for feed value.

Randy Pryor, Extension Educator

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Saline County

306 West 3rd Street, Wilber, NE 68465

Phone (402) 821-2151 • Fax (402) 821-3398 • e-mail: randy.pryor@unl.edu