

Tall Fescue

Festuca arundinacea



Description

Perennial, long-lived bunchgrass with short rhizomes; shiny, dark green leaves with prominent veins. Grows 2 to 4 feet tall in seed head stage. Tolerant of soil acidity, low fertility, and poor drainage, and relatively tolerant of drought and overgrazing. Most older fields are infected with an endophytic fungus, which reduces animal performance but aids in survival of plant.

Uses

Pasture, hay, erosion control.

Advantages

Tolerant of low fertility and acidic soils, well suited for winter stockpiling, long growing season. Endophyte-infected varieties are more tolerant of overgrazing than any other forage. Endophyte-free tall fescues are available and result in better animal performance. Generally not affected by insects and diseases.



Tall fescue has thick, wide leaves with prominent veins, and the emerging leaves are rolled in the bud. There is no obvious ligule.

Disadvantages

Endophyte-infected plants hinder animal performance. Low-endophyte varieties must be well managed (not overgrazed) for persistence. All tall fescue produces minimal growth in hot, dry conditions.

Seeding

Rate: 15-20 lb/a
Depth: 1/3-1/2 in
Primary Date: Aug 15-Oct 1
Secondary Date: Feb 1-Apr 15

Harvest

First harvest: May 1-15
Annual yield: 2-4 tons of dry matter/a