

Dalrymple Farms Develops New Variety Of Forage Crabgrass

It has been more than 23 years since FARM SHOW first reported on crabgrass as a forage crop (Vol. 18, No. 2). R. L. Dalrymple produces and now sells three improved varieties of the seed. Demand continues to grow as more people become familiar with it.

Dalrymple Farms now provides three forage varieties of crabgrass; Red River Crabgrass, Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass, and Quick-N-Big Spreader® Crabgrass. The newest variety, Quick-N-Big Spreader® Crabgrass is very much like Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass (see information later here in) but it has much more ability to squat around the crown, and spread by those stems rooting at the joints. This helps it fill out a thin stand, and this characteristic should help make it recover better from short use, or trample damage.

“We sell across the entire country, but the 23 to 25 most South East states are our major market,” says Dalrymple, Dalrymple Farms. “We have a lot of return customers, but there are still a lot of people who haven’t heard of using high production crabgrass for high quality summer forage.”

Dalrymple’s Red River Crabgrass, Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass, and Quick-N-Big Spreader® Crabgrass are different than the low growing weed you find in your lawn. The forage varieties can grow 2 to over 4 ft. high, spread by stolons and squatting stems and tillers, and produce seed for volunteer re-establishment.

It’s one of the highest-quality summer grasses, stays green until frost, and can continue to be grazed after frost as a stock pile. Forage quality of the crabgrasses is always upper level for summer grasses. Percent protein is relative to nitrogen supply. With adequate nitrogen, percent protein in younger grazing stages can be in the mid 20%. Our hay from crabgrasses usually runs 10% to about 18%, with an overall average of about 12% CP the way we fertilize. Grazing stage digestability is usually from about 60% TDN to over 70% TDN.

Seed prices of these varieties vary some with the year, but is usually around \$6 to \$8 per pound. “In very severe drought our crabgrass fields stayed green longer than other forages, but eventually they turned brown as well,” says Dalrymple.

He notes that his fields had no measureable rain in 7 weeks in 2011 and more than 40 days with temperatures of 100°F or more. The weather bureau reports the area had the least rain in 115 years.

“It is mind boggling to me, even though I have worked with crab grasses since 1972,”



Photo shows swathing a 5th year volunteer stand of Quick-N-Big® crabgrass. All varieties are excellent for hot weather grazing and hay.

says Dalrymple. “The Quick-N-Big® still grew knee high and was enough to swath for some seed and bale for hay.”

All varieties are adapted to dryland regions of about 22 in. rainfall and greater. Dalrymple Farms is at the 26 in. average annual precipitation zone. Of course, the grasses grow better, and best, in precipitation zones of 30 to over 40 in. and more. All varieties grow best where daily summer high temperatures are regularly at least 80 to 85° F and higher up to 100°F. These grasses grow very well under irrigation in any moisture zone of warm enough temperatures. The grasses are not adapted to tight clay, clay loam, wetlands, salty, or alkali soils.

In a good year, he says, the crops can yield up to 6 tons of dry matter per acre under intensive management. More usual returns are closer to two to three tons of dry matter per acre in a pure stand, which is a lot of high quality summer grass, often similar to wheat and other winter annuals in quality.

“It can be seeded to a pure stand at a rate of 3 to 6 lbs./acre, on a good seed bed preferably, or used in a mix of summer forages,” he says. “These grasses can also reasonably well succeed by planting seed into other thinned forages where there is space, such as thin fescue or orchard grass, and let weather (frost seeding) and livestock tread-in assist the planting. “They can also be double cropped with winter legumes and annual grasses such as wheat, rye, etc..”

Red River Crabgrass is a highly productive, big runner type crabgrass that can get to 2 to 3 feet high at hay stages. Quick-N-Big® crabgrass is a more erect aggressively stooling type crabgrass that can make a few runners and it is a bigger, faster developing crabgrass than Red River. Quick-N-Big® tends to sprout faster than the Red River.

Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass and Quick-

N-Big Spreader® Crabgrass make stands sooner and are 2 to 3 weeks faster/earlier to reach proper first grazing or hay cutting. Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass and Quick-N-Big Spreader® Crabgrass can get over 4 feet tall, but they should be used before that to leave a leafy stubble. When growing conditions are good at sprouting time, Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass types will outgrow Red River crabgrass and will be near knee high while Red River crabgrass is about ankle high. Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass types tend to be better in cooler climates.

All these varieties make excellent summer stockpile.

Graziers often ask about using these grasses in more northern and western areas. That is, colder and drier areas. Dalrymple Farms has gotten good feedback on this, using Quick-N-Big® or Quick-N-Big Spreader® Crabgrass varieties. Good success has been reported from lower elevations in Idaho, far southern North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Colorado. And always for the warm summer periods, in a dry climate, under irrigation. Then in drier states of California, Arizona and always in these areas under irrigation.

The forage crabgrasses discussed here are among the most widely adapted of any single forage type developed as a named variety. Think about this – the Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass type can grow well from Idaho to Florida; from California to the East Coast and from the Dakota country to south Texas, always with good soil moisture. Dalrymple Farms does not know of any other single forage variety that is as well adapted to that much U.S.A. space. Fantastic!

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Reader Inquiry No. 03