Improved grass varieties benefit farmers in many ways!

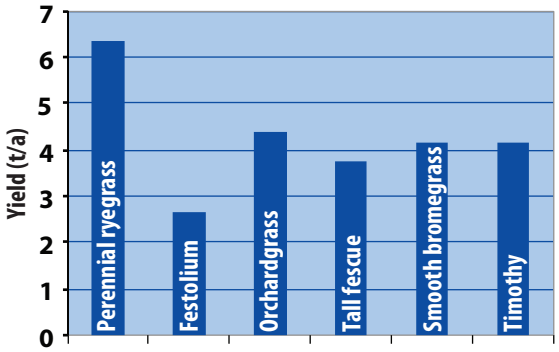
Good genetics improve performance—choose the best grass variety for you

Improved grass varieties yield more

Grass varieties vary in adaptation to local conditions. Those that are well adapted yield more. Yield difference among varieties is great (see comparison at right). Land cost, fertilizer, fencing, and other production cost are about the same regardless of yield. So the highest yield produces forage at the lowest cost per ton.

Grazing animals need forage all summer—some improved varieties yield more late in the growing season to provide longer grazing.

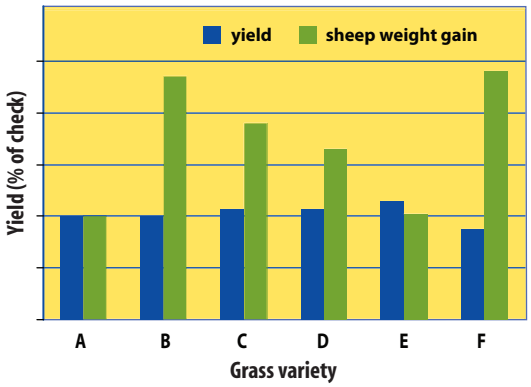
Annual difference between highest and lowest yielding variety University of Wisconsin trials



Animals gain more weight or produce more milk

- Better tall fescue varieties have increased calf weaning weight of about 55 pounds per calf, which translates to an extra $44 to $66 per cow/calf pair annually.
- Improved tall fescue varieties produced 50 to 162 pounds of stocker weight gain per acre in university trials. For stockers valued at $0.90 per pound, this is a return of $45 to $145.

Yield and animal performance are not always the same



Improved grass varieties last longer

Grass varieties sold in the U.S. are developed in many parts of the world. Making sure the variety is adapted to your area will increase stand life.

Improved varieties have disease resistance

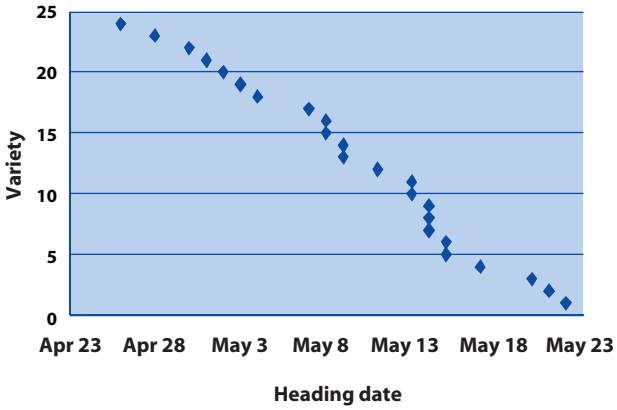
- Diseases lower grass yield and reduce stand life.
- Some diseases also reduce animal intake such as rust (at right) which occurs on ryegrasses, festoliums, orchardgrasses, and tall fescues.

Select grass varieties with needed maturity

- Use late maturity to mix with alfalfa.
- Use early maturity to mix with clover.
- Use late maturity orchardgrass to mix with other grasses.

Be careful not to buy turf grass varieties for grazing animals. Turf types are low yielding and may have endophyte.

Buy high quality seed from a reputable source

- Assurance of seed source
- Known purity
- Lack of noxious weeds

Heading date of different orchardgrass varieties