

FORAGES

Gains on Gamagrass.

Switchgrass, Indiangrass, and big and little bluestem are some of the native warm-season grasses being evaluated at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center in Americus, Ga.

Of all those tested, the most promising forage so far appears to be eastern gamagrass. Under rotational grazing, it produced average daily gains of 1.8 pounds last year and 2.15 pounds this year under dry land conditions.

The cattle graze the Pete variety of eastern gamagrass at the Carter Center. Crude protein content varied considerably, ranging from 9.4 to 13.7%, depending on soil fertility and the steminess of the plants.

The disadvantages of eastern gamagrass include its slow rate of establishment. Grazing isn't recommended during the first year. It also is vulnerable to competition from other plants. On this site, fescue and bermudagrass were the main competitors.

One big shortcoming is seed cost, which can be as much as \$10 per pound. In the Deep South, up to 10 pounds of seed per acre is the recommended seeding rate. The stand at Americus was established with 14 pounds of seed per acre. By comparison, stands in Western areas can be obtained with 4 to 7 pounds of seed per acre.