

The Dakota Farmer

New Intermediate Wheatgrass Coming

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The USDA ARS Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory in Mandan, N.D., and the Bismarck Plant Materials Center are currently working on a planned release of a new cultivar of intermediate wheatgrass called "Manifest," which has shown greater ability to withstand grazing while at the same time maintaining the yield and quality desirable in intermediate wheatgrass.

Average yields for Manifest were very comparable to the other cultivars and Manifest had the highest yield when averaged across all locations.

While Manifest had slightly lower crude protein and in vitro dry matter digestibility than the averages of all the cultivars, it is still high quality forage for livestock.

The big advantage of Manifest is its improved ability to withstand grazing. This was tested by marking individual tillers or shoots of different cultivars and determining if those shoots remained alive, died or were replaced by new shoots after being grazed. This information was then compiled into a shoot replacement ratio. The higher the ratio the better a cultivar does under grazing.

Because of Manifest's high shoot replacement ratio, this cultivar should withstand grazing and have increased stand longevity.

The USDA-NRCS Bismarck Plant Materials Center established a Foundation Seed production field of Manifest in 2006 and the first harvest of seed was in late July of 2007. This seed will be cleaned and allocated for seed increase with hopes of Manifest seed being commercially available in 2010 for pasture, hayland plantings and other conservation uses.

Source: Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory