

# Demand Grows For Forage-Type Crabgrass Seeds

It has been more than 20 years since FARM SHOW first reported on crabgrass as a forage crop (Vol. 18, No. 2). R. L. Dalrymple now produces and sells two improved varieties of the seed. Demand continues to grow as more people become familiar with it.

“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 forage.”

Dalrymple’s Red River Crabgrass and Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass are different than the low growing weed you find in your lawn. The forage varieties grow 2 to 4 ft. high, spread by stolons 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. Grazing stage digestibility is usually from about 60% TDN to over 70% TDN.

Seed prices of both varieties vary some with the year, but is usually around \$7 to \$8 per pound. “In 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



**Demand continues to grow for improved crabgrass varieties of the seed. “This Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass is making excellent hot weather grazing.”**

have worked with crab grasses since 1972,” says Dalrymple. “The Quick-N-Big® still grew knee high and was enough to swath for some seed and bale for hay.”

Both 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 40 in. and more. Both 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 well under irrigation in any moisture zone of warm enough temperatures. The grasses are not adapted to tight clay, clay loam, wetlands, or salty, alkali soils.

In a good year, he says, the crop 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 grass, often similar to wheat and other winter annuals.

“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. “It can also be double cropped with winter legumes and annual grasses.”

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 some runners and it is a bigger, faster developing crabgrass than Red River. Quick-N-Big® tends to sprout faster than the Red River.

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

Both of these grasses are for high quality summer grazing, and they make high quality summer grass hay as well.

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**Reader Inquiry No. 62**

## Lamb-Sized Giant Rabbits

Spanish Giant rabbits are the size of a small lamb and can produce as much as 15 lbs. of meat. Originally introduced in the early 1900’s by Spanish rabbit breeders, the Spanish Giant nearly became extinct.

The big breed was created by crossbreeding Flemish Giants with large Spanish rabbit breeds. The original breed had reproductive problems and digestive issues.

According to Vicente Garcia, Valencia Agricultural Research Institute, Valencia, Spain, the Spanish Giants have potential for the amount of meat they produce, but also

for the speed at which they breed. Litters of 16 bunnies are common.

If reintroduction of the Spanish Giant is successful, it will join about 10 other large rabbit breeds around the world. Garcia says the breeding program for Spanish Giants is intended to test its productivity and profitability with the goal of introducing the breed in a widespread way for human consumption.

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**Spanish “Giants” produce up to 15 lbs. of meat and often have litters of 16.**

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