

Dalrymple Farms Provides Seed For Varieties Of “BIG” Crabgrass

It has been more than 24 years since FARM SHOW first reported on crabgrass as a forage crop (Vol. 18, No. 2). R. L. Dalrymple produces and sells improved varieties of the seed. Demand continues to grow as more people become familiar with it.

Dalrymple Farms now provides four forage varieties of crabgrass; Red River Crabgrass, Dal’s Big River Crabgrass®, Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass, and Quick-N-Big Spreader® Crabgrass. The newest variety, Quick-N-Big Spreader® Crabgrass is 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 too 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. “We are aware of good production farther north in Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, even to the northern area of Wisconsin.

“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 quality summer forage,” he says.

Dalrymple’s Red River Crabgrass, Dal’s Big River Crabgrass®, Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass, and Quick-N-Big Spreader® Crabgrass are different than the low growing crabgrass weed you find in your lawn. The forage varieties can grow 2 to 4 ft. high, or even higher. It’s spread by stolons, 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 dry 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 digestibility 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 often stay green longer than other forages, but eventually they turn brown as well,” says Dalrymple.

He notes that his fields had no measurable 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,” says Dalrymple. “The Quick-N-Big® variety still grew knee high and was enough to swath for some seed and bale for hay.”

All varieties are adapted to dry land 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 yields 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 succeed reasonably well by planting seed into other thinned forages where there’s space, such as thin fescue or orchard grass and bermuda grass, and let weather (frost seeding) and livestock tread-in assist the planting. Some tillage also helps. “They can be double cropped with winter legumes and annual grasses such as wheat, rye.”

Red River and Dal’s Big River Crabgrass® are highly productive, big runner type crabgrasses that can reach 2 to 3 feet high at hay stages. Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass is a more erect, aggressively stooling type crabgrass that is a bigger and faster developing crabgrass than Red River and Dal’s Big River®. Quick-N-Big® and Quick-N-Big Spreader® varieties tend to sprout faster than the Red River and Dal’s Big 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 earlier to leave



Photo shows swathing a planned volunteer stand of Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass for high quality hay. All four varieties are superb for high quality grazing and hay.

a leafy stubble. When growing conditions are good at sprouting time, Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass types will outgrow Red River and Big River crabgrass, and will be near knee high, while Red River and Dal’s Big River® Crabgrass are about ankle high. Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass types tend to be better in cooler climates and farther north.

All these varieties make excellent summer stockpile, and they are an excellent cover crop alone, or as part of a cover crop mixture.

Grazers often ask about using these grasses in more northern and western areas, which are colder and drier areas. Dalrymple Farms has received good feedback on using Quick-N-Big® or Quick-N-Big Spreader® Crabgrass varieties. Success has also been reported from lower elevations in Idaho, far southern North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Colorado, for the warm summer periods, in a dry climate, under irrigation. In drier states like California and Arizona irrigation is used.

The forage crabgrasses discussed here are among the most widely adapted of any single forage type developed as a named variety. The Quick-N-Big® Crabgrass and Quick-N-Big Spreader® Crabgrass types can grow well from Idaho to Northern Wisconsin 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. 42