

FORAGE RESEARCH UPDATES: Focus on Small Grain Forage

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WISCONSIN

Winter Wheat/Kura Clover Mixtures Produce High-Quality, Early-Season Forage

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Mixtures of winter wheat with kura clover can provide early season production of high quality forage as silage and pasture. Winter wheat and winter rye, sown in autumn, have been used as a source of early spring forage in the northern US. 'Cardinal' winter wheat can be established successfully when no-till seeded into living 'Endura' kura clover in autumn, since kura clover goes dormant relatively early. Harvested at the wheat boot stage in spring, mixtures yielded 2.8 T/ac and contained ~50% wheat and ~50% kura clover. Harvesting 3-4 weeks later when wheat was in the early milk stage resulted in greater yields (3.8 T/ac) and ~65% wheat in the mixture. Although winter wheat alone yielded ~10% more than mixtures, wheat contained >50% NDF and <15% protein while mixtures contained <40% NDF and >25% protein. In addition to improving early season yield and ease of harvest, winter wheat/kura clover silage had 0.24 units lower pH and 50% higher water-soluble carbohydrates than kura clover.