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WHEAT FORAGE YIELDS AT OVERTON FOR 2002-2003 AND THREE-YEAR MEANS

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Background. Wheat can be an important winter forage for cattlemen in Texas. Wheat is also often used as a dual purpose forage and grain crop in many areas. Wheat's growth curve is similar to rye and it normally will produce good forage in December and January. Its total season forage production is normally slightly less than ryegrass, rye, or oats. Wheat, with adequate moisture, will also grow-off rapidly after seeding in a prepared seedbed and produce forage early in the fall. Wheat normally has good winter hardiness and will not winter-kill, except under extremely cold conditions. There are significant differences between varieties over years and during the growing season.

Research Findings. A wheat forage variety test is conducted annually at the TAMU Agricultural Research and Extension Center at Overton. Commercial and experimental wheat varieties were evaluated during the past 3 years. Fertilizer application rates and dates for the 2002-2003 study are noted in Table 1. Planting dates were early September normally; however, in 2002 the planting date was 13 September. Seed were drilled into a prepared seedbed at 1 inch depth at 110 lb/ac. Seed was planted in 7 rows spaced 6 inches apart. Plot size was 4 x 12 ft with four replications. The plots were harvested with a Hege plot harvester at a cutting height of 2 inches on 7 November, 11 February, 10 March, 26 March and 29 April. Rainfall was adequate in the fall and winter to produce good forage yields; however, in March, April and early May below average rainfall limited yields. In the first harvest on 7 November, good forage production is evident. Higher yielding commercial varieties were Lockett, Natchez, Savage, TAM 202, which were closely followed by other entries. On the 2nd harvest on 11 February, good production was obtained on most entries. Highest yielding variety was Natchez. On the 10 March harvest, good yields were obtained; however, there was not much significant difference between varieties. On the 26 March harvest better yielding varieties were Savage, Lockett, and Roane. On the last harvest on 29 April, Pioneer 25R57 produced the highest yield. For the total season forage yield, Natchez, Savage, Pioneer 25R57, Lockett, and Roane were higher producing entries and very similar in production. Of the varieties tested over 3-years, Pioneer 25R57 and Pioneer 25R78 had higher yields but were closely followed by Roane and Sisson. Differences in yield between entries smaller than the LSD under each column may be due to chance. We did not experience any winter freeze damage in 2002-03.

Application. Data presented from these trials should be useful in selecting wheat varieties for your ranch. Depending on variety availability, compare forage yields to determine which variety you want to plant.

Table 1. Wheat forage variety test at Overton, Texas for 2002-2003.

Variety	Harvest	Harvest	Harvest	Harvest	Harvest	Total DMY	3 Yr Mean	
	1 Nov. 7	2 Feb. 11	3 Mar. 10	4 Mar. 26	5 Apr. 29			
	-----pounds of dry matter per acre-----							
HBB-362-7*	1659	1855	1040	571	842	5966	--	
Natchez	1814	2068	872	626	560	5940	--	
Savage	1594	1250	680	1301	926	5751	--	
Pioneer 25R57	1367	1086	958	816	1306	5532	5515	
Lockett	2007	880	1137	1023	325	5329	--	
Roane	1272	1182	868	1021	963	5262	5305	
TX95-24-1*	1551	1710	897	636	428	5221	--	
TX98V9628*	1521	1176	1011	615	625	4947	--	
TX95-38-2*	1438	1601	932	714	225	4909	--	
TX89-81-1*	1507	1884	645	408	410	4854	--	
TX95-118*	1484	1512	855	524	463	4837	--	
TX95-16-1*	1236	1432	1015	534	593	4800	--	
Coker 9184	1361	1219	836	457	861	4733	--	
Pioneer 25R78	1067	1455	927	722	559	4730	5515	
Roberts	1049	1475	758	579	822	4682	--	
TX97-172*	1331	1132	1011	661	472	4606	--	
Sisson	891	1336	779	754	807	4566	5361	
Above	1404	1178	1069	749	162	4561	--	
TAM 202	1375	1124	1013	532	348	4392	--	
TX95-115*	1500	1110	904	410	460	4383	--	
TX95-33-1*	1212	1466	845	687	151	4360	--	
Coker 9803	1073	1657	712	578	322	4324	4793	
TAM 110	1403	906	1091	536	284	4219	--	
Sturdy 2K	1267	635	960	746	468	4076	--	
McCormick	793	1029	799	493	845	3959	--	
TAM 111	1049	632	996	724	368	3768	--	
Mean	1328	1243	921	672	544	4705	5038	
CV	26	33	22	23	47	16		
LSD	311	375	188	144	231	693		

Planted on 13 September 2002. Fertilizer: Preplant 91 lb N, P₂O₅ and K₂O/a. Topdressed with 40 lb N on 12 November, 33 lb N/a on 21 January. Forty lb/a of N, P₂O₅ and K₂O on 6 March and 40 lb N/a on 15 April 2003.

*Experimental line, seed presently not commercially available.