

Growing Meadow Foxtail for Forage

Area of Adaption

Meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) is native to temperate climates and is widely used in wetland areas for pasture or as a hay crop. In the Pacific Northwest it is most productive in fertile soils of cool, moist areas. Although it is drought resistant, meadow foxtail is not productive under moisture stress or high temperature conditions. Once established, meadow foxtail is very persistent and can become a weed. For this reason, other forage species should be used in seed production areas.

Primary Use

Meadow foxtail is primarily used as a pasture grass. It is a long-lived, early maturing, moderately productive perennial grass and produces over a long grazing season in cool, moist environments. As a pasture grass, it is often seeded with big trefoil or white clover. The addition of these legumes improves the performance of the livestock grazing this forage. This mixed pasture is suitable for either sheep or cattle. Meadow foxtail also makes a palatable hay crop if harvested at an early stage of maturity. Because of its timothy-like seed head, meadow foxtail hay is often sold as scotch timothy for racehorses.

Varieties

No specific varieties have been examined for use in Oregon, as practically all seed is harvested from naturalized stands in Oregon. However, Gar-

rison, an improved stolonaceous variety, has been evaluated in Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado. It was found to be a vigorous creeping meadow foxtail.



Establishment

Meadow foxtail has a light, fluffy seed, so seeding is normally done by broadcast methods. The seed is very difficult to drill unless mixed with rice hulls or other seeds. Either early spring or late fall seeding is acceptable. In areas too wet for preparing a seedbed, seeding should be followed by rolling the soil. Areas previously pre-

Use	Precipitation	Meadow foxtail seeding rate	Companion species	Companion species seeding rate
	<i>Inches</i>	<i>Lbs/A</i>		<i>Lbs/A</i>
Pasture	> 40 or wet	8	Big trefoil	2
	or flooded	8	White clover	2-3
Hay	> 40 or wet	10	-----	-----
	or flooded	8	Big trefoil	2

pared for seeding can be harrowed or rolled to improve soil/seed contact.

Fertility and pH Requirements

If meadow foxtail is planted in combination with a legume, no nitrogen fertilizer is needed for high levels of production. However, application of 40 pounds of nitrogen per acre in early spring will result in more rapid spring growth. When meadow foxtail is used as a hay crop without a legume, nitrogen will be needed for satisfactory production. The use of 100 to 200 pounds nitrogen per acre in split applications is the most efficient practice. Specific fertilizer recommendations based upon soil test data are available in OSU Fertilizer Guides 1 and 58 .

Management

When meadow foxtail is used as a pasture grass, a rotational grazing system is best. Since it is not as palatable as some other grasses, heavy grazing pressure for short periods results in best utilization.

The early maturing characteristic of meadow foxtail can be offset somewhat by early cutting or grazing. If used as a hay crop, meadow foxtail should be cut as early as possible in May, since early cut hay is much higher in quality than more mature late cut hay.

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