

FESCUE PROJECT

for

4-H CLUBS

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This project consists of growing 1 acre or more of Kentucky 31 fescue for seed production.

What Ky. 31 Fescue Is

Kentucky 31 fescue is a long-lived grass used for pasture and hay. Seed was obtained by the Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station in 1931 from B. F. Suiter, a farmer near Frenchburg, in Menifee county, who had an old field covered with it. The Kentucky Experiment Station has tested it for several years for yield and adaptation, and recommends it for planting either alone or in mixture with other grasses and legumes. Demand for seed is greater than production and promises to be so for several years.

Where It Is Used

This grass is longer lived than timothy or redtop. For forage it appears to be equal to or better than orchard grass in most parts of Kentucky. It will probably be useful in all counties outside the area now growing the best bluegrass sod.

Seeding

The seedbed is prepared as for other grasses and the seed may be sown in late summer, fall, or spring. The following steps should be taken to sow a seed production plot.

1. Order the seed early enough to have it on hand by the first of August.
2. Plow the ground in July and work it down to a good firm seedbed. When needed, apply 2 tons of limestone and 400 to 600

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pounds of 6-8-6 or similar mixed fertilizer per acre. The limestone and fertilizer can be spread on the land before plowing or they can be spread after plowing and worked into the soil while preparing the seedbed.

3. For this project the seed should be sown August 10 to August 20, if possible, rather than in fall or spring. When sown at this time in August it will usually make enough growth to survive the winter without any winter-killing and will generally produce a moderate yield of seed in the next year.

The seed may be sown either solid or in rows. If sown solid it should be drilled or broadcast evenly either by hand or with a hand seeder at a rate of 10 pounds of seed per acre. Cover broadcast seed with a spike harrow or a brush, if possible, then roll the land with a corrugated roller. Do not use a drag or flat roller on the land after sowing, because smooth soil is likely to wash more than rough soil.

Seeding in rows requires only 5 pounds of seed per acre and larger yields of seed per acre may be produced than from solid seeding. Row seedlings are also kept free of weeds more easily than solid seedlings. The rows should be far enough apart to permit cultivation. A hoe may have to be used and some weeds may have to be pulled. Weeds have to be kept down by the use of such tools.

If the seed cannot be sown in rows with a drill, rows about 3 inches deep may be made on the contour and the seed scattered carefully by hand so that some fall in the bottom and some on the sides and upper edges of the furrow. The rain may be relied upon to cover the seed but when the ground is dry it is better to run a tractor wheel or some other heavy wheel on the furrow to cover the seed and pack the soil.

Where row planting is done, the lime and fertilizers are applied at the same time and in the same manner as for solid planting.

Care After Planting

Since this project is prepared for seed production only, no small grain nurse crop is to be used in starting the grass crop. The object is to produce good seed that is clean and in all other respects satisfactory for sale. Wild, weedy grasses may come up volunteer. The more common are the common cheat and one or more other annual brome grasses related to cheat but not quite so tall. They can be recognized by the seed heads before the fescue is harvested. All of these are winter annuals, sprout with the fall rains and head out and mature about the same time as the fescue does. This must be removed by hand before harvest.

After harvesting the seed crop the stubble should be mowed and removed from the field or the field should be grazed to accomplish the same result. This encourages seed stalk production the next year.

Time and Method of Harvest

The fescue crop matures somewhat unevenly; that is, some plants ripen early and some late. It averages a few days later than wheat in the same locality. The seed shatters rather easily.

Perhaps most crops are harvested with the combine but the grass can be cut with a binder and later threshed with a grain separator or combine harvester used as a stationary thresher. Where neither combine nor separator are available it can be cut high with a mower and after a week or two of curing, flailed out on a canvas or ordinary tarpaulin. If mowed, it should be raked in a day or two or piled with a fork. This should be done while the grass is damp with dew in order to prevent shattering insofar as possible.

The threshed seed will usually have to be recleaned before it is pure enough to be sold or sown.

Yields

Yields range from 75 to 400 pounds per acre. Perhaps higher yields are likely to occur under most favorable conditions.

Disposal of Seed

The demand for seed promises to exceed production for several years. County agents will endeavor to aid project leaders to sell their seed.

PROJECT RECORD

1. Size of project _____ 2. Planted in rows or broadcast _____
3. Pounds of seed used _____ 4. Cost of seed _____
5. Kind and amount of fertilizer used _____
6. Cost of fertilizer _____
7. How was ground prepared? _____
8. Date seed was sown _____
9. How was crop cultivated? _____
10. What weeds gave most trouble in keeping fescue clean? _____
11. When was crop harvested? _____ 12. How harvested _____
13. Amount of seed harvested _____ Value _____
14. Total number of hours of work on this project _____
15. Expenses:
 - (a) Rent charged at \$20 per acre.....\$ _____
 - (b) Rent on team, 10c per hour per horse or mule.. _____
 - (c) Value of club member's time at 20c per hour.. _____
 - (d) Value of help's time at 25 cents per hour..... _____
 - (e) Value of tools at 40 cents per acre..... _____
 - (f) Value of manure at \$2 per 2-horse wagonload.. _____
 - (g) Cost of commercial fertilizer..... _____
 - (h) Cost of seed sown..... _____
 - (i) Other expensesTotal expenses\$ _____
Value of seed harvested.....\$ _____
Profit or loss.....\$ _____

Name of 4-H Club Member _____

Address of 4-H Club Member _____

County _____ Name of Leader _____

Approved: _____
County Agent

Lexington, Kentucky

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