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Fact Sheet 2005 : 'Quick-N-Big ®' Crabgrass and ' Red River' Crabgrass Hay And Management for Hay

'Quick-N-Big®' Crabgrass (QNBCG) and 'Red River' Crabgrass (RRCG) are researched and selected varieties of crabgrass , with both being larger type , and generally more full season and totally productive that the "common" or naturalized crabgrass's , which can be anything from very short , squatty types to fairly decent types.

They are warm season grasses easily managed for volunteer stands. We have worked with crabgrass forages as "real grasses" since 1972 and with these two varieties since they began. These two improved varieties are used for grazing , hay , green chop, baleage, and soil conservation. They are grazed well by cattle, horses, sheep, goats, exotics, and hogs and poultry. They are used as a single crop, double crop with winter annuals, and in innumerable mixtures. QNBCG and RRCG purpose as a very palatable , high quality hay is the subject of this information

Both varieties are widely adapted to the 25 most southeast states from Nebraska east and south to the coasts. The QNBCG appears to grow better in more northern climates , and both grow well to the west under irrigation. Within these areas they should be planted on the proper soils, etc. QNBCG has also been successful in Arizona, California, Colorado, and Idaho, etc. under irrigation.

QNBCG and RRCG hay, well managed, are **very palatable** and of **high forage quality especiall for summer grasses**. Feeding trials we did at Noble Foundation years ago showed cattle **preferred crabgrass hay over good bermudagrass and good Old World bluestem in every trial with all hays being of very similar protein content**. That is also a common report from producers who feed the hays. Both varieties have a soft , pliable stem, compared to usual summer grass hays , and that is also a quality attribute , and encourages livestock to ""eat it all"". There is very little and essentially "no waste" when feeding these hays in good waste controlling hay feeders. QNBCG has a bit larger stem than RRCG , but it , too , is relatively soft and pliable, and the slightly larger stem helps the plant stand better as it nears haying stage. Angus heifers, being fed high quality RRCG hay in a hay feeding trial in R.L.'s Noble Foundation days, produced 0.5 average daily gain on hay alone, ie , without other feeds.

Grazing trials of 13 different summer grasses showed crabgrass was first choice in all cases except fall maturity stages , when leafy Johnsongrass was preferred over RRCG in those trials.

. Good, lush QNBCG and RRCG hay well fertilized usually averages 65% to 75% digestibility regardless of time of season. Digestibility of crabgrass hays is usually higher than most other summer grass hays. It is "easy" to have bermudagrass hay test **5% up to 15% points less in digestibility** , than good crabgrass hay. QNBCG and RRCG fertilized with about 75 pounds of actual nitrogen will usually be about 10% to over 12% CP when properly harvested in our experiences.

Remember--% protein is nothing but a dilution of nitrogen supply and the growth stage of the plant at the hay harvest. The greater the yield, the greater the dilution. On Dalrymple Farm these hays have tested up to over 18% CP , but that was partly due to dry weather that prevented good growth , and the nitrogen supply was , no doubt , diluted in a much smaller than usual amount of hay.

Because QNBCG and RRCG are very palatable and high quality for a summer grasses, the hay is often used for special purposes , such as horse hay , young stock hay , etc. .

Good QNBCG and RRCG hay is very palatable and good feed quality , it is relished by all classes of cattle, horses, sheep, goats , and exotics. **Due to it's good quality characteristics, it is often used exclusively for special livestock groups such as weaning calves, stocker calves, first calf heifers, horses, and any livestock needing favored with high quality hay**. Horses and dry cows can be wintered on good crabgrass hays without other feeds and maintain proper body condition. Crabgrass pasture is also used for brood cows, but frankly, it is often more quality than they need. An exception is , as stated above, cows and horses can be wintered on good crabgrass hay without additional supplement. **It is superb hay for incoming stocker cattle during the preconditioning phase on ranches and in the receiving lots**. It is superb hay to feed to stocker cattle on winter annual winter pastures. If a snow storm hits, cattle can continue to grow at a slower pace on free-choice QNBCG and RRCG hay until the snow is gone.

For hay yields to be good there must be a good stand from either new plantings or managed volunteer. **Good production includes managing for good stands, good nitrogen fertilization (and lime, phosphorus, and potassium as needed) , and weed control if needed.** A good stand of QNBCG and RRCG is often sufficient for weed control without herbicide spraying. When two or more hay cuttings are made during the season, nitrogen should be pre-emergence applied or top-dressed at first tillered stand and for each crop soon after each cutting. In areas of about 25 to 30 inches of annual precipitation, about 50 to 75 pounds of actual nitrogen should be used about twice each season for upper level yields. In higher rainfall areas of 30 to 35 inches or more annual

precipitation, 75 to 100 pounds of actual nitrogen should be used about twice per season ,or more, depending on the number of harvests, and the production targets. In the southeast and far south US it is possible to do three or more topdressings a season for top level yields. These examples are for good growing seasons within those areas. Use common sense—if it is dry, more fertilization may not be wise.

In West Central to Eastern Oklahoma , 2 or 3 hay cuttings are usual , with good growing conditions. Dalrymple Farms usually cuts 2 harvests in combination to our seed harvests , and often a third regrowth for late grazing is produced. Up to 5 cuttings per summer in the more humid and longer summer season of the SE US has been reported. Each cutting needs it's own fertilizer (food) supply. It is possible to get one cutting more from QNBCG than RRCG due to the difference in early growth.

QNBCG and RRCG are relatively lush hay crops if growing conditions are good. This means they will need to be dried longer (3 days minimum in Oklahoma and up to 5 days of sunny/breezy weather) between cutting and baling , than lower quality , less lush , hay crops. A good procedure in the drier regions is to mow to make a wide windrow to better aerate the swath. **Harvest the first , early , hay when it is knee high to mid thigh high and in the boot to very early head stages**. Harvest later crops with **early green head seed heads that will shatter some seed for volunteer**. See below. Lay the swaths or raked windrows sideways to the prevailing winds to aid in drying when possible . Cut at about 3 to 4 inches tall always to **leave some lower green leaves** for stand survival and faster re-growth. If it is needed , cut to a taller stubble to be sure there is leaf left on the stem for re-growth. **In some cases we have cut up to 5 to 6 inches tall in summer to get assured re-growth**. **At the last cutting for a season, cut it as short as possible "to get it all" including that taller stubble left in earlier harvests.**

In more humid regions, mow the crop to leave a flat mown crop, or a wide swathed windrow. Ted the hay a day or two later, then rake and bale as it gets dry. Additional tedding may be needed. Some producers in the humid areas make baleage (grass silage) from crabgrass to better deal with the humid conditions. QNBCG and RRCG make good small square bales for specialty markets , or larger round bales. Round bales store outside very well , especially when double or triple wrapped with hay harvest "net wrap". However, inside storage is always good if it is available.

Repeat--To assure volunteer stands, **always harvest hay when there is some seed shatter**. First harvests are often very leafy , and need to be cut before there is many seed heads. **To sample the seed for volunteer** , walk across the meadow , hand grab some seed heads every step of the way. Hand thresh those heads as you go. And when there is ¼ to 1/2 teaspoonful of seed , per grab or per step, that should be enough for good volunteer with shallow renovation (tillage) for volunteer management. . Second and third crops start coming to head before the crop is ready to make hay. **Do not wait for a fully ripened head to be shatterable**----that would be **much too much seed** for proper

volunteer. Mow for hay, if possible , just as outlined above. In the case of **QNBCG** , it breaks seed dormancy sooner that RRCG , and it is wise to **get some seed drop for volunteer late in the summer** to assure seed available to germinate in the spring.

In North Central to South Central Oklahoma and to the east, one crop of QNBCG or RRCG hay is often made after wheat graze-out or grain harvest. Two to three crops can be made from single crop stands in good seasons if production management is good. We have heard of three to five cuttings in a season in the longer summer and moist southeast US. Remember—QNBCG and **RRCG are a premium hay that should be for livestock that can benefit from the quality.**