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WHEAT FORAGE YIELDS AT OVERTON FOR 1998-99 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 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 hardness and will not winter-kill, except under extremely cold conditions. There are significant differences between varieties and over years. Some varieties produce more forage in the fall while others produce higher yields in the winter or spring.

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 1998-1999 study are noted in Table 1. Planting dates were early September normally, however, in 1998 the planting date was 18 September. Seed were drilled into a prepared seedbed at an 1 inch depth at 110 lb/ac. 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 8 December 1998, 27 January, 17 February, 16 March, and 9 April 1999. In the 8 December harvest, Quantum XH 1888 and XH 9806 two hybrid wheats, produced the higher forage yields, although they were closely followed by several varieties. In the 27 January and 17 February harvests, all yields were low indicating little forage would have been available for grazing animals. We believe most of the applied fertilizer leached out in the sandy test site due to 11 inches of rain in September, 7 inches in October and nearly 6 inches in November. Therefore, the study was top-dressed with 65 lb/ac N, P, and K on 25 February. Thereafter good forage production was obtained. In the 16 March harvest, Quantum 1888 was the top forage yielding entry. In the last harvest on 9 April, nearly 50% of the seasonal yield was produced. All entries produced high yields. Higher yielding commercial varieties were Dozier, Patton, Jaypee and Coker 9543. We did not experience any winter freeze damage in 1998-99.

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. Rye will usually outproduce wheat for forage production, however, rye seed is often scarce and expensive. Therefore wheat is an attractive alternative. Note rye forage yields elsewhere in this report. Ryegrass can also be seeded with wheat and total season yield will be

increased, as well as extending the production of high quality forage into late May.

Table 1. Wheat forage variety test at Overton, Texas for 1998-99 and 3-year average.

Variety	Harvest 1 Dec 8	Harvest 2 Jan 27	Harvest 3 Feb 17	Harvest 4 Mar 16	Harvest 5 Apr 9	Total Forage Yield	3-Year Average
	-----pounds of dry matter per acre-----						
Quantum XH 1888	818	329	315	932	1592	3986	— ^a
TX90-77*	731	328	407	707	1532	3704	—
TX94D5910-Ov*	786	174	268	771	1585	3584	—
AR584A-3-1*	627	241	309	655	1659	3490	—
Dozier	565	272	416	647	1512	3411	—
TX87-20*	480	351	263	677	1634	3405	—
AR494B-2-2*	668	288	321	689	1389	3354	—
Quantum Q 7406	913	270	268	692	1167	3310	—
TX91-130*	745	209	317	591	1446	3306	—
TX91-57*	647	336	437	605	1254	3279	3710
TX91-27*	748	310	301	541	1366	3265	—
TX91-13*	660	281	255	766	1282	3243	—
TX91-92*	555	280	239	641	1493	3208	—
Patton	653	267	368	433	1461	3180	—
Jaypee	615	208	384	780	1159	3144	2859
Quantum XH 9806	511	318	195	658	1453	3135	—
Coker 9543	511	338	239	530	1512	3129	—
Roberts	670	275	246	530	1405	3125	—
Coker 9134	428	243	329	692	1430	3122	3293
TX93DB550*	536	276	357	722	1144	3035	—
Clemens	583	274	181	451	1518	3007	3097
TX93DB990-Ov*	394	232	335	742	1273	2975	—
FL 8868*	467	472	492	466	1020	2916	—
Pio. 2566	425	210	285	756	1143	2819	2359
Quantum QAP 7510	597	231	214	435	1284	2760	—
Coker 9663	319	278	307	510	1192	2606	—
Grand Mean	602	280	309	639	1381	3211	—
CV	39	33	33	27	16	13	—
LSD (0.10)	216	84	94	156	202	386	—

Planted September 18, 1998. Fertilization: Preplant 500 lb 10-20-20/ac. Topdressed with 50 lb N/ac on November 2, 40 lb N/ac on December 18, 40 lb N/ac on January 15, 500 lb 13-13-13/ac on February 25, 1999, and 25 lb N/ac on March 24, 1999.

*Experimental line, seed not available to growers.

^aVariety not tested over the last 3 years.