

Ryegrass Selection for Dairy Operations in Florida. (C03-blount134634-Poster)

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Abstract:

Dairy operations in Florida have traditionally used corn as the main silage crop in dairy diets. Winter forage alternatives for ensiling have become a focus of some dairies and the basis for this investigation on the use of ryegrass. Shenandoah Dairy in north Florida, which produces about 285 ha ryegrass for silage annually, participated in an on-farm, 2-year trial (1999-2000 and 2000-01) with the University of Florida in testing four improved ryegrass cultivars, Surrey, Passeral Plus, Big Daddy and Jumbo, with Jackson and the popular cultivar, Marshall. A RCBD field design with four replications was used each year. Averaged, combined yields from green chop and 2 silage harvests for the improved cultivars were 18.3 and 17.4 Mg ha⁻¹ in 2000 and 2001, respectively, compared to 13.9 and 15.0 Mg ha⁻¹ for Jackson, and 12.6 and 14.0 Mg ha⁻¹ for Marshall. Two-year averaged leafspot disease ratings at this location indicated that lowest percent leaf disease (5%) occurred for Jumbo and Big Daddy, compared with Passeral Plus and Surrey (20%), Jackson (30%) and Marshall (40%). These data suggest that newer cultivars may be more productive for high management dairy silage operations in Florida.

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