

# The Ampac Impact

April, 2003

A Quarterly News Publication

## 2003 Harvest Outlook Fair to Average at Best

By George Pugh

President of Ampac Seed Company

Oregon grass seed production estimations are usually a function of acres times weather. Weather usually means rainfall, which can be broken down into inches and timeliness.

The Willamette Valley of western Oregon is historically the major production area for most species of cool season forage and turf grasses other than Kentucky bluegrass and bromes. In the past decade the valley acreage has expanded from an almost totally dryland production of about 420,000 acres, to a good mix of irrigatable ground that has previously been in row crops, peppermint, and wheat production reaching a total of over 500,000 acres. At one time the total producing area in Oregon exceeded 550,000 acres. The newer acres are generally high value soils with higher than average yield potential. Production acreage probably peaked in 2002, but the average yield was moderated by moisture conditions.

As the traditional crops for these new acres rebound in price, we are seeing some turn away from grass seed production. At planting time, winter wheat prices were attractive relative to grass seed prices. Estimates of as much as 100,000 acres of new winter wheat production have been projected in the Willamette Valley this year. Much of this was former grass seed acres. With the apparent overproduction of tall fescue and the end of many production contracts, the resulting plowouts may affect this year's production. However, inventories should carry most varieties. Other species will see

smaller or no drops in production.

Moisture, as expressed in rainfall, is another matter in the Willamette Valley where most of the acres are not irrigated. Perennial ryegrass, tall fescue, and orchardgrass respond favorably to early fall moisture. Early rain also enhances the chemical control of grassy weeds. From August through October we received less than two inches of rain. The condition of the perennial crops suffered accordingly, and some stands of perennial ryegrass and orchardgrass were severely damaged or removed. Our dry fall has limited us to no better than average yields. While we have since returned to average moisture, the most critical rains come in late May and early June. Therefore, I am predicting:

- Tall fescue will experience the greatest reduction in acres with, at best, average yields.
- Perennial acreage, while probably steady, will yield less because of moisture and pesticide blight. Tight supplies will continue.
- Orchardgrass acreage increases will not come into production until 2004, and existing yields will suffer from stand fatigue and pest pressure.
- Annual ryegrass acres will be near average with unpredictable yields.

Predicting grass seed production, like predicting the weather, is at best an educated guess. At this time I would expect average supplies of all species with the exception of perennial ryegrass. We'll continue to keep you updated on harvest expectations as it draws nearer.

## DEVELOPMENTS

### Stonehenge At The Top Again For Fine Fescues

By Aaron Kuenzi

*Stonehenge* rates as one of the best fine fescues for home lawns. In trialing done under *Low Input* (NTEP's equivalent of home lawns), *Stonehenge* was given a mean of 5.7 for overall turfgrass quality. The highest ranking given to any fine fescue variety in this same trial was 5.9 with an LSD of 0.3, making *Stonehenge* equivalent to the best fine fescue commercially available. We knew it was a very nice looking variety, but after four years of trialing, it has proven to be one of the best!

*Stonehenge* has continued to perform very well in the NTEP trials because of its origins. *Stonehenge's* roots can be traced back to hard fescue trials done at Griffin, Georgia. Its genetics came from hard fescues that survived the extreme environmental conditions of Georgia including heat, drought, humidity, disease, and acidic soils. The plants that survived those conditions were then selected for: heading date, genetic color, and stem rust resistance. These plants were then interpollinated with a variety that was 100% endophyte infected. *Stonehenge* was the end result.



Consequently *Stonehenge* is a hard fescue that exhibits a more compact growth habit, shorter leaf blades, a darker green color, increase disease resistance, increased heat and drought tolerance, and a high endophyte level. It's no wonder that *Stonehenge* ranks at the top.

## Dave's Corner:

*Spring is one of my favorite times of the year. Everyone is busy getting seed out to their customers and the prayers offered in the fall and winter are being answered. We're grateful that you've chosen Ampac Seed and we are committed to being your best supplier. We also appreciate your patience as we endeavor to get the seed out to you as quickly as we can without compromising safety.*

This quarter *Duo* Festulolium takes the spotlight as it continues to perform well in a wide geographic area. Our slogan for *Duo* is, "Like ryegrass... only better!" This continues to be true. It is well known that perennial ryegrass is one of the better cool-season grasses for animal production. But ryegrass has a summer slump that many farmers dislike. However, *Duo* regularly out-yields both diploid and tetraploid ryegrass varieties and continues to do so over the years.

In reviewing 3-year trial data (concluding in 2002) from the Univ. of WI (Lancaster) hay trials, *Duo* yielded significantly more than one tetraploid perennial ryegrass, and two diploid perennial ryegrasses by an average of nearly two tons. At the same location in the 3-year data from grazing trials, *Duo* showed significantly higher tonnage grazed than did any of the ryegrasses and it was also the most palatable grass out of 17 entries. Cattle preferred *Duo* over ryegrass, orchardgrass, brome, and tall fescue. (See: [www.uwex.edu/ces/forage/alf02.htm](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/forage/alf02.htm) for complete info). The farm had significant winterkill and winter-injury two years ago on the ryegrass and in older plots, but *Duo* showed much less injury. The same was observed in Ohio.

At Wooster, Ohio *Duo* had much less winter injury than all of the perennial ryegrasses. It nearly doubled the trial yield mean the next spring and yielded significantly more than all other ryegrass and festulolium varieties in that trial. (See: [www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~per/forage00/index.htm](http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~per/forage00/index.htm) for complete results).

During the summer 2002 drought in central Ohio and near Rock Springs, PA, *Duo* also exhibited improved drought tolerance on farm trials run with Ohio State University. At Michigan State, Penn State, Kentucky, and Cornell, *Duo* has consistently performed very well in hay trials and/or grazing trials (both using cattle and horses). It has nearly always out-performed perennial ryegrasses and other festulolium varieties in yield and palatability.

*Duo's* success is in its genes. It is a cross between tetraploid perennial ryegrass and meadow fescue. Many other festuloliums on the market are crosses between Italian ryegrass and meadow fescue, or even annual ryegrass and meadow fescue. Some are crosses between a ryegrass and a tall fescue. The festulolium family is very diverse. As long as the variety is a cross between the ryegrass family and the fescue family, it is classified as a festulolium. *Duo* performs well because it is persistent and exhibits better summer growth like a meadow fescue, yet has the forage quality and palatability of ryegrass. *Duo* looks very similar to a tetraploid perennial ryegrass, except it has wider leaves. (see photo)

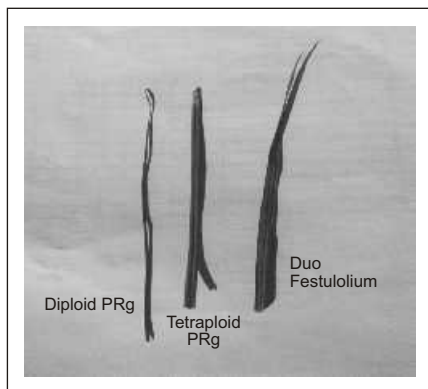
*Duo* works best in mixes. Several of our *Pasture Perfect*® mixes feature *Duo*, including our new *Managed*

*Intensive Grazer Mix* and *Managed Intensive Grazer-Ryegrass Mix*. *Duo* is also featured in these *Pasture Perfect*® mixes: *Show Horse Mix*, *Renovator Special Mix*, *Multi-Purpose Plus Mix*, and our custom mixes.

You can also recommend *Duo* or *Pasture Perfect*® *Renovator Special* for renovating older alfalfa stands or pastures. When added to alfalfa stands, many dairy farmers have seen an increase of up to 5 lbs. of milk produced/cow/day. In areas where Ky-31 tall fescue is predominant, many have had success inter-seeding *Duo* into the Ky-31 fields in August, and relying on fall rains to establish a good stand of *Duo* with Ky-31. This practice helps dilute the endophyte problems in the fescue and it improves the forage quality of the pasture or hay harvested off those fields.

*Duo* is quickly becoming the grass of choice for many dairy, beef, and alpaca producers and horse owners. Considering the flexibility and additional benefits it exhibits, it's easy to see why.

*Agronomist Dave Robison is our mid-west forage and turf representative – specializing in legumes and pasture mixes. You can send Dave your questions at: [dave@ampacseed.com](mailto:dave@ampacseed.com)*



*Duo Festulolium*





# Forage Brassicas Extend the Grazing Season and Profits

By Richard H. Watson, PhD  
Agronomist - Ampac Seed Company

The objective of all livestock production should be to turn relatively low value feeds into high value animal products such as meat, milk, and fiber. To achieve this and actually make money in the current economic climate, producers must find the most cost-effective way of providing both the quantity and quality of feed required to achieve their production goals.

It is now becoming apparent to many producers that the best way to achieve this is using forages in their production system. When many farmers think of forages they often picture a permanent grass pasture. While grass/legume-based pastures should be the foundation of a forage production system, they are subject to climatic and seasonal variation. At certain times of the year perennial grass pastures are not as able to provide either the quantity or quality of forage required to maintain animal production. Generally the solution to this is to increase expensive grain and/or corn silage feed, which invariably increases farm labor, and ultimately reduces profits. Forage brassicas are a wise alternative.

Ampac now offers a wide range of forage brassica species specifically bred to provide large quantities of very high quality forage when cool-season pastures are unproductive. These varieties were bred by the Wrightson forage breeding program in New Zealand. This program leads the world in the development of brassica crops specifically designed for livestock production. Farmers can be assured they are getting the very best forage technology available.

A new addition to the Ampac line is *Pasja*, a forage brassica hybrid from Wrightson that was bred to produce forage from spring through fall. *Pasja* is a leafier brassica variety with excellent regrowth potential that

will provide three or more successive grazings over the warm season. Two acres of *Pasja* will provide enough quality forage to meet one-third of the diet for 30 mid-lactation cows for the whole summer season if it is strip grazed and allowed to regrow. *Pasja* has 20-30% higher energy levels than corn silage and 2-3 times the crude protein levels (see table 1) making it an excellent crop for milking cows or growing beef animals over the summer. *Pasja* is also very suitable for sheep and goat productions. Weaned lambs grazing *Pasja* can gain over 0.6 lbs/day, which is a similar growth rate to feeding grain, but at a fraction of the cost.

For producers that like to grow summer annuals such as millet or sorghum-sudan grass, *Pasja* can be incorporated into these crops to increase the energy and crude protein

content. The summer annual grasses also provide much needed fiber which compliments the highly digestible brassica.

*Pasja*, like most brassicas, will use significant quantities of nitrogen and phosphate, so these nutrients should not be limiting in the soil. Applications of 60-70 lbs/ac of N at sowing, followed by monthly 30 lb/ac (after grazing) applications during the grazing season will encourage regrowth and maintain protein levels. At least 60 lb/ac of Phosphate would be available to ensure optimum brassica growing conditions. Brassicas contain a sulfur compound, therefore fertilizers containing sulfur should be avoided to ensure animal acceptance.

Ampac's comprehensive line of forage brassicas can compliment each other in an integrated system. Differences in maturity, seasonal production, and regrowth potential allow livestock producers to use the different brassica varieties in a mix or as separate crops to extend their forage seasons.

For more information on brassicas available from Ampac, please visit our website at: [www.ampacseed.com](http://www.ampacseed.com).

**Table 1.** Technical information on *Pasja* forage brassica.

	Sowing Rate 1 (lb/Ac)	Days to Grazing	Number of Grazings	Yield (lb DM/Ac)	Energy MJ/KJDM	Crude Protein % (tops)	Digestibility Percent
<b>Pasja</b>	3-4	50-70	3+	9000	13.6	13-22	85
Corn silage					10.2	8	



Cattle grazing on high quality *Pasja* during the summer.