

Improved Forage Grass Releases by the Bismarck Plant Materials Center and Partners

by Wayne Duckwitz

The USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center (PMC) located at Bismarck, North Dakota, cooperatively evaluates and releases forage grasses for improved livestock production. Its first cooperative grass release was in 1946. The PMC continues to evaluate plants for use in National, State, and local conservation programs. Twenty-two varieties of fourteen different grass species have been cooperatively released for the purpose of improving the grazing and haying forage base for livestock operations, primarily in the Northern Great Plains and Midwest. Each released species and variety has been categorized into its potential forage use, site suitability and time of growth. The forage types include warm and cool season grasses for pasture, hayland, rangeland and wet and seasonally flooded areas. Forage quality parameters have been evaluated for many of these releases in cooperation with North Dakota State University.