

# SEED PRODUCTION, STRAW & REGROWTH VALUE

## ANNUAL RYEGRASS

### Description & Adaptation

Annual (Westerwold) ryegrass is mainly used for annual hay or grazing applications, but it is also used for quick ground cover in some turf mixtures. Annual ryegrass is an annual crop that must be seeded very early in the spring and the seed crop harvested mid-summer with similar management practices as wheat. Annual ryegrass tolerates and thrives in excess moisture. It grows well in most regions of Western Canada and is well adapted to different soil types, ranging from light-textured sandy soils to heavy clay soils. Markets demand seed free of Wild Oats and Quackgrass.

### Production Benefits

- Early seeding – Seeded very early in the spring
- Erosion fighter – Annual ryegrass produces a large root mass that can grow to depths in excess of 3 feet
- Soil builder – Dense root system is concentrated in the top 18 to 24 inches improving water infiltration and enhancing soil tilth
- Forage regrowth quality – High feed value and palatable regrowth lasting into the fall
- Straw residue – After the seed crop is harvested mid-summer, straw residue can be used for feed and bedding. Annual ryegrass straw has shown higher protein than cereal crops

### Overview

**Seeding Rate** 15-18 lbs/ac

**Row Spacing** 6 -12 inches

**Seeding Depth** Max. 1/2 inch

**Average Yield** 1,000 lbs/ac to a high of 1,800 lbs/ac

**Seed Production Life** 1 year

**Soil Fertility** 100 lbs of actual N and 30 lbs of actual P per acre should be incorporated before seeding

**Harvesting** Annual ryegrass is usually swathed at about 45% seed head moisture and combined below 15% seed head moisture



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## Benefits of Baled Straw After Seed Harvest

The straw residue (after seed crop harvest) has shown 8-10% crude protein and can make up to 75% or more of a wintering cow's diet. The amount of dry matter feed a cow will eat can be predicted based on feed quality. Cows eating good quality feed will ingest between 2.0 to 2.25% of their body weight daily. Poor quality feed will be consumed at the rate of around 1.25% of body weight daily.

## Benefits of Baled Straw After Seed Harvest

After the seed crop is harvested early in mid summer, the aggressive regrowth is suitable for grazing or baling. Grazing or haying regrowth provides late-season feed that can exceed 65% digestible dry matter and 20% crude protein delivering outstanding animal performance.

## Western Beef Development Centre

According to the Western Beef Development Centre research comparing spring-seeded winter annual crops in Saskatchewan (2004-2006), "all species, including annual ryegrass exhibited excellent total digestible nutrient values which would support very good gains on yearling steers or heifers or calf gains from cow calf pairs." Further, an economic analysis revealed annual ryegrass had the highest net returns per acre in a grazing system at Melfort, and was a close second to winter wheat in profit across all locations.

## Predicted Beef Production

Predicted total livestock production from five annual crops grown for summer pasture at three locations.

