

Forage yields of 24 alfalfa varieties at Center¹, San Luis Valley, CO, in 2001.

Variety	Brand/Source	1st Cut 6/05	2nd Cut 7/17	3rd Cut ³ 9/08	2001 Total
-----tons/acre ^{2/} -----					
Select	Forage Genetics Int'l	1.75	2.38	1.75	5.88
DK 143	Monsanto/DeKalb	1.74	2.31	1.75	5.80
WL 325 HQ	W-L Research	1.67	2.38	1.75	5.76
DK 142	Monsanto/DeKalb	1.73	2.26	1.75	5.73
WL 327	W-L Research	1.77	2.20	1.75	5.72
Pro Gro	M.B.S. Inc	1.70	2.26	1.75	5.71
WL 232 HQ	W-L Research	1.76	2.20	1.75	5.70
54Q53	Pioneer Hi-Bred Int'l	1.67	2.25	1.75	5.66
Columbia 2000	Public	1.88	2.00	1.75	5.63
AmeriStand 201	ABI Alfalfa	1.71	2.12	1.75	5.58
Baralfa 42IQ	Barenbrug Colorado	1.78	2.01	1.75	5.54
FG 4200	Ark. Valley Seeds	1.52	2.27	1.75	5.54
Magnum V	Dairyland Seed	1.54	2.23	1.75	5.52
Award	Asgrow Seed	1.65	2.08	1.75	5.48
Aspire	Asgrow Seed	1.65	2.08	1.75	5.48
Abound	Asgrow Seed	1.55	2.19	1.75	5.47
Geneva	Novartis Seeds	1.56	2.12	1.75	5.43
53V08	Pioneer Hi-Bred Int'l	1.64	2.02	1.75	5.41
FG 3R139	Forage Genetics Int'l	1.60	2.06	1.75	5.40
Gold Plus	M.B.S. Inc.	1.57	2.07	1.75	5.39
Vernal	USDA WI-AES	1.54	2.06	1.75	5.35
DK 134	Monsanto/DeKalb	1.47	2.12	1.75	5.34
Ranger	USDA NE-AES	1.51	2.04	1.75	5.30
HybriForce™-400	Dairyland Research Int'l	1.53	2.00	1.75	5.28
Average		1.64	2.15	1.75	5.54
CV %		13.2	10.3	---	6.1
LSD _(0.05)		NS	NS	---	NS

¹ Trial conducted on the Sherril Mix farm, Roads 8N & 1W; seeded 6/16/00.

² Yields calculated on oven-dry basis.

³ Third cutting yield estimated.

Field Site Information:

(Elevation 7700 ft.) Average annual precipitation 6.92 inches. Average frost-free days - 88days (32°F). Average last spring frost - June 6; average first fall frost - September 11.

Soil Series: Norte gravelly sandy loam

San Luis Valley Alfalfa Variety Trial at Center

Merlin A. Dillon

The San Luis Valley is a huge, flat intermountain valley surrounded by snow-capped mountains. The area is comprised of Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Rio Grande, and Saguache counties. This area has been increasing its alfalfa yield, alfalfa price and acreage and produced 165,000 acres in 2000. San Luis Valley alfalfa hay production was valued at \$49.5 million. High altitude acreage in Colorado is over 200,000 acres.

Growers here usually cut three times per year. Stands typically last 5-7 years. Winterhardiness and persistence are important variety selection factors; as well as yield and pest resistance.

Researcher Comments

Alfalfa is not part of the rotation at the SLV Research Center, therefore, I am grateful for the cooperation of local potato/barley/alfalfa producer, Sherril Mix.

The trial was planted solo in June, 2000; the stand is very good in this the first full year of harvesting. This field was harvested three times; however, miscommunication resulted in the loss of the third harvest. This trial will be harvested two more years and a new trial will be planted in 2003.

Conditions produced about an average yield in 2001. The early spring was warm which made the first cutting a little early (June 5). The second cutting (July 17) was mostly rained on by late July and early August monsoon rains. The third cutting (Sept. 8) was bigger than some years because of the early first cutting. Variety differences were not statistically different; however, Vernal and Ranger were close to the bottom of the trial as they have been for the last 20 years. Vernal and Ranger were

nearly 0.7 tons per acre below the top yield, as usual.

Researcher

Merlin Dillon, Area Extension Agent, Agronomy, has conducted alfalfa trials in the San Luis Valley for 20 years. Raised on a dryland farm in southeast Colorado (Baca County), Merlin received his B.S. in agronomy from Panhandle State University in Goodwell, Oklahoma, and an M.S. in agronomy from Colorado State University. Merlin worked for Kansas State University as a crops researcher in Tribune, KS, as an irrigated crops consultant, and as an independent fertilizer applicator prior to joining CSU Cooperative Extension in 1982. His research has included small grain variety trials (soft white and hard red spring wheat, durum wheat and barley and oats) as well as quinoa, canola, and biocontrol crops.