

## 2003 Small Grain Varieties for Forage Production

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Overseeding bermudagrass pastures with small grains offers producers an opportunity to extend the grazing season and minimize hay feeding. A previous article outlined establishment methods and the pros and cons of each small grain species. This article is available at <http://www.georgiaforages.com> in the Georgia Cattleman archive. Briefly, rye is the most cold hardy small grain species grown in Georgia and typically produces more fall forage and earlier spring forage than either oat or wheat. Oats are the least cold-hardy of the three tested species and have a similar forage production curve as wheat. Recommended varieties for each species are based on statewide forage test yields from Tifton, Griffin and Calhoun GA as well as Marianna FL. Recommended varieties are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Recommended 2003 small grain varieties for forage production.**

Species	Recommended Varieties
Rye	Bates, Oklon, Early Graze, Pennington SPIRye, Wintergrazer 70, Wintermore, Wrens Abruzzi, Wrens 96
Wheat	Pioneer 26R61, Roberts, USG 3209, AGS 2000
Oat	NC Rodgers, Harrison, Horizon 314, Chapman, NK Coker 227, Plot Spike LA 9339

Blending 20 pounds of ryegrass seed per acre in overseeded small grains is an excellent practice to extend spring grazing. There are no official UGA recommendations for ryegrass varieties; however, yields of most commercial varieties were evaluated in this testing program. These yields (along with those of the tested rye, wheat and oat varieties) can be viewed online at <http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/swvt/> or a hard copy is available in all county extension offices.

### Special Precautions:

Wet spring weather delayed rye seed harvest and negatively impacted the seed quality. Buy fungicide-treated certified seed if possible. If this is not possible or if planting seed grown on-farm, use a hopper box fungicide treatment. Expect rye seed prices that are higher than normal because of these problems.

If planting locally grown seed, check the germination by placing 100 seed in a Ziploc bag with a damp paper towel. Seed should germinate in about 7 days. Simply count the number of seed that germinate for an estimate of seed quality. Good rye seed should have greater than 80% germination. Bermudagrass should be overseeded with 90 to 120 lbs of

small grain seed per acre. Adjust seeding rate upward if a lower germination rate is observed.

Remember that overseeding and fertilizing small grains is an expensive process—particularly if unfavorable weather occurs or uncontrolled grazing is practiced. Dr. Curt Lacy recently developed interactive budgets for overseeding. These budgets can be accessed through a link at <http://www.georgiaforages.com>.