

ONA REPORTS

published in

THE FLORIDA CATTLEMAN AND LIVESTOCK JOURNAL

May-1989

Good Care Makes Stargrasses A Good Cow Feed

By Paul Mislevy

University of Florida, Range Cattle REC



For questions or comments regarding this publication contact

[Paul Mislevy](#)

Florico and Florona stargrasses were released to commercial growers in 1988. Both grasses are long-lived persistent perennials adapted to many south Florida flatwood soils. The tropical nature of these grasses limits their productivity and persistence to the southern two-thirds of peninsular Florida. The following are important characteristics of each grass:

Florico stargrass Advantages are:

1. Daily gain of 1.2 pounds and 720 pounds liveweight gain per acre at three yearling steers per acre.
2. Digestibility two to three percent higher than Ona stargrass.
3. Dry matter yields generally higher than Ona stargrass at Ona and Immokalee.
4. Generally more persistent than Ona stargrass.
5. Makes excellent growth in late fall and spring with adequate moisture and fertility.
6. Nutritious when harvested or grazed every four to five weeks.
7. Rapid establishment from vegetative cuttings.
8. Hay cures rapidly during favorable weather conditions.

Disadvantages are:

1. Requires a higher fertility program than bahiagrass, hemarthria, or pangola digitgrass.
2. Forage quality drops rapidly after six weeks of regrowth, and following a heavy frost.
3. Top growth easily killed by frost.
4. High HCN-p for about a four week period following heavy N fertilization (100 pounds per acre).
5. Should not be grown north of Orlando or where temperatures drop below 20 to 25 degrees.
6. Vegetatively propagated from stem cuttings.
7. Produces little forage during drought stress period of April and early May.

Florona stargrass Advantages are:

1. Daily gain of .94 pounds and a liveweight gain of 590 pounds per acre at three yearling steers per acre.
2. Extremely persistent when properly managed.
3. Dry matter yield averaged about 11 to 15 percent higher than Ona stargrass, with forage quality about equal or slightly lower.
4. Makes excellent growth in late fall (October to November) and spring (April to May) under drought stress conditions, when adequately fertilized.
5. Nutritious when harvested or grazed every four weeks to five weeks.
6. Rapid establishment from vegetative cuttings.
7. Hay cures rapidly during favorable weather conditions.

Disadvantages are:

1. Requires higher fertility than hemarthria, pangola digitgrass, or bahiagrass.

2. Forage quality drops rapidly after six weeks of growth and following a heavy frost.
3. Top growth easily killed by frost.
4. High HCN-p for about a four week period following heavy N fertilization (100 pounds per acre).
5. Should not be grown north of Orlando or where temperatures drop below 20 to 25 degrees.
6. Vegetatively propagated from stem cuttings.

Limited amounts of plant material will be distributed to commercial growers during the summer of 1989. Interested individuals may contact the Agricultural Research and Education Center, Ona, for more details. Telephone 941-735-1314.