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## **Performance of Tifton 85 Bermudagrass in Central Florida**

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Tifton 85 is a hybrid bermudagrass selected, evaluated and released by Dr. G.W. Burton in 1992, cooperatively between the University of Georgia Coastal Plain Experiment Station, Tifton, GA and USDA-ARS. Tifton 85 appears to be a persistent, long lived bermudagrass that spreads by above ground runners (stolons) and rarely develops rhizomes (underground stems). This perennial grass has adequate cold tolerance to survive most Florida low temperatures. However, if temperature drops to 12 to 15° F many above ground runners and plants attached to these runners could be killed back to the original plant. Tifton 85 produces no seed, therefore it needs to be vegetatively planted from sprigs (above ground stems) at 1500 lb/A. This grass establishes rapidly when planted into a clean seed bed free from common bermudagrass. Seven days following planting when new shoots appear, the grass should be sprayed with 1 qt/A Weedmaster® or equivalent to control watergrass and broadleaf weeds. At this time, the grass should also be fertilized with 35-35-35 lb/A N-P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>-K<sub>2</sub>O, followed by an additional 50 lb N/A 40 days after planting. In 1995, this establishment procedure produced 2.0 T/A dry matter, 50 days after planting.

Once established, Tifton 85 appears to be persistent and competes well with common bermudagrass when properly managed. Tifton 85, like most bermudagrass and stargrasses, has a high fertility requirement, therefore, an intensive grazing system must be practiced to obtain maximum utilization of the forage.

Research results from an ongoing mob grazing study comparing Tifton 85 and Florakirk bermudagrass and Florona and Florico stargrass indicate Tifton 85 produced similar dry matter yields (6.4 T/A) as Florona and Florico stargrass and about 1.0 T/A more than Florakirk bermudagrass. However, crude protein was significantly lower in Tifton 85 than Florakirk bermudagrass during June-August. Generally the digestibility of Tifton 85 was similar to Florico stargrass and Florakirk bermudagrass but generally about 4-5

percentage units higher than Florona stargrass. During the hot, humid, summer conditions Tifton 85 tends to support much more disease than Florico and Florona stargrass, but less than Florakirk bermudagrass.

In summary, Tifton 85 appears to be a good bermudagrass for central Florida, that establishes rapidly, is persistent, and produces high yields of high quality forage, but will not tolerate standing water.

If additional information is desired please call the Range Cattle REC 941-735-1314.