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'Jiggs' a potential bermudagrass for central Florida

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Jiggs, bermudagrass which originated in south Texas was tested at the Range Cattle REC over a 3-yr period. The grass forms a thick dense sward, consisting of fine stems that attain a height of 24 to 30". This perennial grass establishes rapidly when recommended establishment procedures are followed. Jiggs appears to be well adapted to many south Florida flatwood soils and will tolerate saturated soil conditions equal to other bermudagrasses and stargrasses. Once established, Jiggs is very persistent and competes well with common bermudagrass when properly managed.

Jiggs, like most bermudagrasses and stargrasses, has a high fertility requirement consisting of 200-40-80 lb/acre N-P₂O₅-K₂O + micros with N applied in a split application under grazing. When this grass is grown for hay a fertility program consisting of 75-30-60 lb/A N-P₂O₅-K₂O + micro nutrients should be used for each harvest.

Dry matter yields of Jiggs are equal or better than Florona and Okeechobee stargrasses, ranging from 6.6 ton/acre (total warm season yield at 4 wk regrowth) to 8.1 ton/acre (total yield at 5 wk regrowth). Jiggs will also produce good forage yields during the frost-free cool season, averaging about 1.4 ton/acre from mid December to mid April. This cool season yield is slightly better than rhodesgrass and Florona stargrass.

Forage nutritive value of Jiggs is similar to stargrasses ranging from 10 to 16% CP and 51 to 58% digestibility during the summer-fall period. Jiggs can be used for both hay and grazing. It matures rapidly; therefore, grazing frequency (rest period between grazing) or hay harvest should not extend beyond 4 or 5 wk. Jiggs bermudagrass harvested for hay cures rapidly, usually equally or sooner than Florona stargrass. Diseases have been limited to a low incidence of rust during early spring.

Jiggs has been selected primarily because of its fine stems, dense turf, good yielding ability, during both the warm and cool season, good persistence, with average quality. If additional information is desired, please call 863-735-1314.