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## **'Florakirk' A Bermudagrass for Hay**

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'Florakirk' bermudagrass is a fine-stemmed, persistent, cold tolerant, high yielding, good quality perennial grass released for hay production by the University of Florida. This grass is best adapted to the panhandle and northern part of peninsular Florida, however it will persist well in the colder sites and other flatwood areas in central Florida. When vegetatively planted on a clean seedbed, free of common bermudagrass and bahiagrass, Florakirk spreads rapidly. When proper establishment practices are followed (call Ona for recommendations), Florakirk can be cut for the initial crop of hay 75 days after planting. Florakirk like most bermudagrasses and stargrasses, has a high fertility requirement; therefore an intensive hay harvest system must be practiced to obtain maximum forage yield. Dry matter production of Florakirk has been good in central Florida and in Gainesville under clipping, where yields averaged 10 percent higher than for Coastal bermudagrass over a 10-year period. However, annual Florakirk yields have been about 15 percent less than Tifton-85, Florico and Florona in central Florida. When adequate fertility is available, Florakirk tends to produce good late season yields and initiates rapid spring regrowth even under drought conditions. Forage yields measured from January through March showed that Florakirk out-yielded all standard perennial grasses grown in central Florida. Like most bermudagrasses, Florakirk matures rapidly; therefore regrowth interval for hay harvest should not exceed 5 weeks. Crude protein concentration over a 4- and 5-week harvest frequency averaged 15 percent for Florakirk, compared with 14 percent for Tifton-85 bermudagrass and 13 percent for Florico and Florona stargrass. Forage digestibility was 62 percent for Florakirk, compared with 61 percent for Tifton-85 bermudagrass and 63 percent for Florico and 55 percent for Florona stargrass harvested every 4 to 5 weeks and fertilized with 50 Ib/A N/ harvest.

A foliar blight (*Rhizoctonia*) has been observed on Florakirk along with most other bermudagrasses and stargrasses. Blight incidence seemed to be associated with dense stands of tall, uncut, ungrazed forage during high humidity, wet summer conditions and

tended to disappear during dry conditions of October. Florakirk is susceptible to leaf spot (Helminthosporium), tar spot (Phyllachora) and rust. Generally, these diseases are not evident if the forage is harvested at a 4- to 5-week frequency for hay. However, if this grass is used for grazing, a build-up of disease could occur in the stubble, but will not result in plant stand loss. Florakirk is a viable option for cattle and horse owners who desire a high quality, fine-stemmed grass for hay. If additional information is desired, please call 941-735-1314.