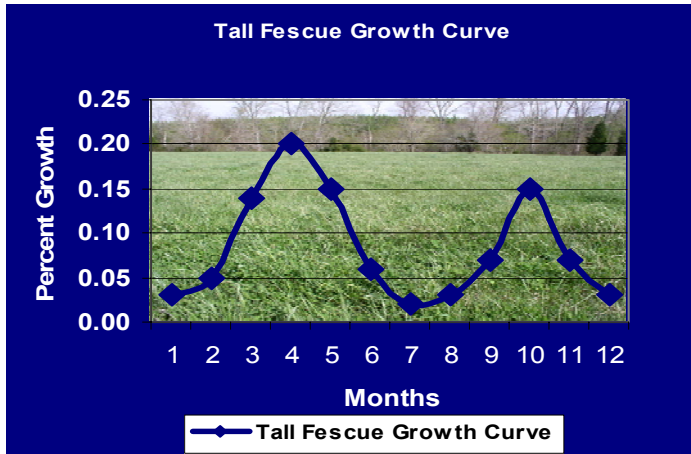


Tall Fescue Characteristics and Management

Tall fescue offers many advantages such as seasonal distribution, high yield, good quality, and persistence. It is well suited for stockpiling which lengthens the grazing season into fall and winter. However, tall fescue has an endophytic fungus which can have adverse effects on grazing animals.



Tall Fescue and Orchardgrass Samples Taken July 12, 2001 in Carroll County, VA

Forage	%CP	%TDN
Ky 31 Tall Fescue	19.19	64.33
Orchardgrass	19.53	63.99

Endophytic Fungus

- Over 75% of VA's tall fescue fields are \geq 50% infected with an endophytic fungus.
- Levels of 40% or more can produce adverse effects in animals.
- The fungus lives within the plant and is only transmitted by seed.
- There is more fungus in the stems and seed heads than the leaves.

Endophyte infected (EI) fescue spreads due to:

- Vigorous plant growth
- Animal avoidance
- Drought and insect tolerance

Fungus Effects on Animals

- More time in water and shade
- Elevated body temperatures
- Reduced feed intake
- Rough hair coats




Source: *The Fescue Endophyte Story*, Oregon Tall Fescue Commission

Source: *Tennessee Farm & Home Science*, Fall 1991

Practical Solutions for Endophyte Infected Tall Fescue

1. Rotate through fields to keep tall fescue vegetative
2. Manage mixtures to favor other forage species

Examples:

When a significant amount of warm season forages are in the mixture (common bermudagrass, crabgrass)

- Graze fescue close in spring to reduce summer competition
- Summer application of N encourages warm season forages

3. Graze or mow to remove seed heads
4. Plant legumes (clover or annual lespedeza) to dilute toxicity
5. Feed hay other than tall fescue
6. Stockpile tall fescue for late autumn and early winter grazing
7. Feed hay if required during stockpiling period
8. Designate sacrifice areas to feed hay and allow pasture recovery



A well distributed mix of 30% to 40% red and/or white clover reduces the negative effects of endophyte infected tall fescue through dilution and improved quality.

NOTE: New tall fescue varieties have recently been released with non-toxic fungal strains that show good survival with no decline in animal production.

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