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To: Rains County Leader

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## Warm Season Grass Establishment

I have been getting several calls of late from forage producers want to plant new stands of warm season grasses. I am often asked what the best thing to plant is. That is really a million dollar question. In my opinion it depends on many variables.

1. What are your goals? (Hay production, grazing, or both.)
2. What type of ground is it? (Upland , bottom land, etc.)
3. How committed are you to a long term fertility program.
4. And the **BIG** question, how much are you willing to spend?

If you're looking at hay production only I would consider sprigging improved Bermuda grass varieties such as Coastal, Jiggs, Alicia, or Tifton 85. But you must then consider question #4.

How much are you willing to spend? All of these varieties are more expensive than seeded varieties. Yet, they are higher yielding than most seeded varieties on the market. During normal rainfall years, yields can be expected to be very good.

Hybrid Bermuda grass such as Tifton 85 or Coastal takes a long term commitment by the producer. Producers must keep a very close eye on forage fertility program. Hybrid Bermuda grass takes higher amounts of fertilizers than that of your seeded varieties. In time of high fertilizer prices this must be a major consideration factor.

If you are planning to only graze the forage then there are some much cheaper options. In my opinion there are two excellent grazing forages that have been standard for many years. These are Common Bermuda Grass and Bahia grass. Yes, I said Bahia grass. Although many producers work to get Bahia grass out of hay meadows it works very well in a grazing situation. Bahia grass along with Common Bermuda responds very well to grazing pressure.

However if you are possibly wanting to graze and cut the forage for hay these two grasses

are probably not the answer. Common Bermuda grass is relatively drought tolerant and can stand high traffic (cattle pressure) but it is substantially lower yielding than other Bermuda grass varieties. As for Bahia grass it is not as drought tolerant and it can be extremely hard to cut in a hay meadow.

Also, there are some other hybrid type seeded varieties that would be a good option this year since the price of Common Bermuda is elevated. Most all of your hybrid seeded varieties will give you higher yields than that of common making it more feasible to both graze and cut hay. Check with your local feed store and seed supplier for varieties available in this area and pricing.

Now when it comes down to it dollars and cents are the major consideration factors in determining what type of grass you want to put in the field. Below is a current price list along with the recommended seeding or sprigging rate.

Tifton 85 - 35 bushels per acre - Cost of \$165/acre sprigged.  
Coastal - 35 bushels per acre - Cost of \$150 /acre sprigged.  
Jiggs - 35 bushels per acre - Cost of \$165/acre sprigged.  
Common Bermuda grass - 10 lbs/acre - Cost of \$5.25/lb.  
Tierra Verde (Hybrid Bermuda) – 12-15 lbs/acre – Cost of \$ 5.12  
Stampede Plus (Hybrid Bermuda) – 15 lbs/acre – Cost of \$ 5.58  
Cheyenne II (Hybrid Bermuda) – 15 lbs/acre - Cost of \$ 9.00  
Bahia grass - 20 pounds/acre - Cost of \$4.40/lb.

Hopefully this information will give forage producers and those wanting to plant grass some considerations when deciding what to plant.