

Alfalfa variety trials provide valuable information to north Idaho farmers

AT A GLANCE

The alfalfa variety trials demonstrated yield differences of 33 dryland alfalfa varieties over a four year period seeded at two locations in north central Idaho.

The Situation

The north central Idaho beef cattle advisory committee met in December of 2011 and one of the needs identified at this meeting was for more information on dryland alfalfa varieties that grow and yield well in northern Idaho. It had been almost 30 years since any alfalfa variety testing had been conducted by the University of Idaho in northern Idaho.

Our Response

To address the need for information on alfalfa varieties, Jim Church, Ken Hart and Doug Finkelnburg, University of Idaho Extension educators, designed and conducted alfalfa variety testing trials. With the help of Glenn Shewmaker, University of Idaho Extension forage specialist, 33 dryland alfalfa varieties from all over the United States were identified and planted in the variety trials along with one Sanfoin mix. The variety trials were seeded in May of 2012 at two locations, one near Greencreek, Idaho and the second trial near Nezperce, Idaho. The 33 dryland alfalfa varieties and one Sanfoin mix were seeded in small 5 by 20 feet plots and randomized and replicated four times at each site. Yield data was taken on each variety for four consecutive years starting in 2013 and ending in 2016. Each year yield data was analyzed and results were shared at producer meetings and through direct mailings. Final four year data will also be shared with producers.



Thirty-three dryland alfalfa varieties were evaluated and yield data collected by University of Idaho Extension from 2013-2016.

Program Outcomes

The alfalfa variety trials produced valuable outcomes including:

- Increase in knowledge regarding which dryland alfalfa varieties grow and yield well on a consistent basis in north central Idaho.
- The Sanfoin mix grew better in the dryer site but did not yield well compared to alfalfa and lasted only two years in the plots.
- Increase in the requests for information on alfalfa varieties from growers in Idaho, Washington and Oregon.
- Increased the requests from private industry companies on data from the variety trials.

The Future

The alfalfa variety trials concluded in June of 2016. These trials were successful and provided valuable information for growers. It appears that there has been very little work on grass varieties and grass/legume mixes for forage production in northern Idaho. Work in this area may need to be done in the future.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

We would like to thank the following cooperators who made it possible to conduct the alfalfa variety trials:

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- Mart and Marty Thompson, Nezperce, Idaho
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