

farm's forage needs and decrease risk of a crop failure. Intensively managed grass *can* be a profitable alternative to the traditional corn-alfalfa rotation.

From our observations, to get the most production from grass you should:

1. Establish hardy species of grasses that can be intensively managed. From our demonstration plots Reed Canarygrass and Tall Fescue are the best for the wettest fields that will be kept in long-term grass production. Orchardgrass does better on slightly better drained soils. Avoid cutting-sensitive grasses like Bromegrass and Timothy.
2. Apply a lot of nitrogen. Economic returns on Nitrogen on these more aggressive species of grasses can usually be achieved with an application of 150 pounds of actual N per acre per year, split at least three times during the year. Nitrogen applications have also been shown to increase crude protein and delay maturity in grasses. Be sure to credit the nitrogen from manure applications.
3. Cut early, cut often. For this area, look to start cutting from May 20 to May 25 to get good quality. Timely harvested first cutting grass has excellent quality and will make a lot of milk; late cut grass will make for a large feed bill. Research has shown that grasses will quickly put on fiber and lose quality during the hot, long days of mid-summer. You may have to cut on a 28-35 day interval to get dairy quality feed on straight grasses.