

Sudan Grass Seed



Sudan seed becomes palatable at maturity and are readily consumed by upland game birds such as quail, turkey, pheasant, and prairie chicken, and by migratory birds such as duck, geese, and dove.

The environment in Yuma County is ideal for Sudan grass seed production with hot, dry days, plentiful water and rich, fertile soils. The Yuma area produces over 1,000 acres of Sudan grass seed which is exported throughout the world.

There are about 60,000 Sudan grass seeds per pound. Seeds may be white, yellow, red, or brown, with the darker colored seed being higher in tannin. Seeds, about 1/4 inch long, form from large terminal clusters of many branched flowers called a panicle, each producing up to 6,000 seeds.

Sudan grass belongs to the sorghum family. On certain occasions Prussic

Acid, one of the most dangerous poisons, has been found in almost all the sorghums. Sudan grass is no exception. All plants contain some nitrate, but excessively high amounts are likely to occur in forages grown under stressed conditions. As nitrates are most abundant in the lower 6 to 8 inch stem base of plants, Sudan grass is best left until over 20 to 24 inches tall to avoid prussic acid poisoning.

Sudan grass is an extremely drought tolerant plant and grows up to 9 feet tall under ideal conditions, with relatively broad coarse leaves with a prominent mid vein. Sudan is a member of the grass family and a native wild plant of Africa and many of today's varieties originated on that continent. Sudan was also grown in India before recorded history and in Assyria as early as 700 BC.

Sudan can be harvested 70 to 90 days after planting and the majority of Sudan grass is harvested in May, June and July. Once the Sudan is cut, it takes seven days to cure and has about 75% the energy value of corn.

Sudan grass is used for pasture and hay, once Sudan grass begins to flower, the quality and feed value drops drastically.

Sudan grass yield on two cuttings is usually 5 to 5.5 tons per acre. Three Sudan grass cuttings should yield between 6 to 8 tons per acre. Sudan grass should be planted at a rate of 120 to 150 pounds of seed per acre. This high seeding rate produces finer stemmed hay that is desirable for export to Japan.

The sophisticated breeding practices and feeding methods that originated in the Kobe region of Japan utilize large quantities of Sudan grass. Kobe steaks, known by the Japanese as "white steak" are produced from cattle fed a diet consisting of steam flaked Midwest corn, alfalfa, Sudan grass, bakery meal, molasses, vitamins and minerals. The feeding process takes an additional 45 days for the animals to reach market.

Certified "Piper" is the most common Sudan variety. It is high yielding and has the quality characteristics desired for the Japanese and other export markets. Last year alone, the Japanese bought 2,000,000 tons of compressed Sudan hay bales.

400 steers or 1,600 feeder lambs will consume a 35-acre Sudan grass pasture in 12 to 20 days.

