

## Saskatchewan Forage Variety Demonstrations

Terry Kowalchuk, M.Sc., P.Ag.  
Provincial Specialist, Forage Crops

In 2014 the regulations for registering new varieties of forage crops was changed so that merit testing was no longer required. Concerns about the lack of performance information were raised through an annual advisory meeting on forage crops and a project was initiated to address this need.

In the spring of 2017, demonstrations to assess hay yield and plant persistence were established at Melfort, Saskatoon, Scott, and Swift Current. The Melfort site included an additional trial to assess seed yield. Three of the trials (Swift Current, Melfort – seed yield and Scott) were implemented through Agri-ARM partners, one through AAFC (Melfort -forage yield), and one through the U of S.

The forage yield trials will compare forty different varieties of grasses and legumes at the four locations. The seed yield demonstration will compare 30 different varieties. All trials will compare commercially available varieties against check varieties within each species. Yield sampling will begin in 2018 and run through to 2020 at which time a report will be published and placed on the Saskatchewan Forage Council website.

The main goals of the forage variety demonstrations are to provide independent assessments of forage varieties for producers, breeders, and seed companies, and to give public breeders the ability to compare new germplasm to commercial varieties. Participating seed companies include: Ag Vision, SeCan, Brett Young and Performance seeds.

Several groups including the Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development Commission, Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, SaskMilk, Ducks Unlimited contributed funds while Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the University of Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan Leafcutter Association provided in-kind support. The significant industry support for the project helped the Saskatchewan Forage Council obtain additional funding from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture Demonstration of Practices and Technologies (ADOPT) program.

The project is an excellent example of the tremendous degree of collaboration and partnerships that exist with in Saskatchewan's forage and livestock sector.

With a little luck from Mother Nature, producers will soon have some reliable information about which varieties perform well in their regions.