Forage Factsheet – Red Clover

Species Name: Red Clover - *Trifolium pratense*

Origin: Europe and Asia

Longevity: 1-3 years

Uses: Hay, stockpiling, green manure.

Optimal time of use: Single cut varieties are recommended for forage production in Saskatchewan. Cut red clover hay when 25% of the flower buds start to show color. Use a mower conditioner to hasten dry down. Red clover is generally not recommended for pasture as it does not withstand animal traffic or high intensity defoliation. Red clover can cause bloat. Regrowth may be grazed after the killing frost.

Recovery after use: After haying, red clover regrows well and can provide fall grazing. Haying red clover twice per year significantly decreases stand longevity.

Yield: Red clover yields approximately 3800 lbs/acre (4318 kg/ha) in the Black and Grey soil zones.

Palatability/Nutritional Value: Red clover cut at 25% flower-color has between 65-70% dry matter digestibility and 19% crude protein. Red clover hay does not maintain a green color, but does maintain good nutritive value as hay or stockpiled forage.

Competitiveness: Red clover is moderately competitive once established.

Winter Hardiness: Red clover requires good snow cover and adequate rest in the late summer to ensure winter survival.

Drought Tolerance: Red clover has poor drought tolerance.

Erosion Control: Red clover can be used as a plow down crop to add organic matter and nutrients to the soil.

Ease of Establishment: Red clover has moderate establishment vigor.

Suggested Mixtures: Red clover works well in a mix with timothy.

Salinity Tolerance: Red clover has poor salinity tolerance.

Flooding Tolerance: Red clover withstands one to two weeks of spring flooding.

Soil Texture: Red clover is suited to well drained fertile soils. It requires consistent moisture throughout the growing season.

Acidity Tolerance: Red clover tolerates soil pH as low as 5.0.

Management Considerations: Red clover a is short-lived forage. Inoculate seed and fertilize according to soil test results.

Source: Saskatchewan Forage Council, 2007.
Dryland Forage Species Adaptation CD.