

## Suggested Summer Forage Seeding Rate Targets for West Texas

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*Little research and a lot of inconsistencies!* That describes the available information regarding forage seeding rates for the Southern High Plains. The table below is a summary of limited Extension data as well as information from various seed development and sales representatives, seed company literature, and local farm stores. Keep in mind that many hybrids do have specific seeding rate information, which should be taken into account.

Many forage growers underestimate the ability of different forages to “flex” or respond to environmental conditions when seeding rates are lower. Thus producers may tend to bump seeding rates upward and slightly increase their costs. Tillering, stem size, and leaf size at what seems to be somewhat lower plant populations can do an adequate job of compensating when seedling emergence is low, lower seeding rates are used, or when growing conditions are very favorable.

Use the attached table as a guide in choosing targeted seeding rates for different forages in the Texas Southern High Plains. Also check your seed dealer guidelines. Be sure to verify seed size. Targeted rates may range by a few pounds pending drill accuracy and field conditions,

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**Table 1.** Targeted rates reflect +/- 5 lbs./A for seeding rates of 20 lbs./A or more, and +/- 2 lbs./A for seeding rates of 10 lbs./A or less. Seeding rates at 20” are intermediate between narrow and wide spacings.

Forage type	Typical seeds per lb.	Dryland		Irrigated	
		----- Row Spacing in Inches -----			
		20” or more	6-20”	20” or more	6-20”
		----- Lbs./Acre -----			
<u>Sorgo</u> -sorghum/sudan	24,000-26,000	8	12	12	20
<u>Sorgo</u> -sorghum/sudan	20,000-22,000	9	13	12-15	20-25
Conventional sorghum/sudan	16,000-17,000	10	15	15	25
Forage sorghum--silage	16,000	8	--	12	20
--grazing	16,000	12	15	20	25
Brown mid-rib (BMR) forage sorghum or sorghum/sudan	16,000	7-10	10-15	10-15	18-25
Photoperiod sensitive sorghum/sudan	16,000	10	15	15	25
Hybrid pearl millet	70,000-90,000	5-6	8-10	6-8	12-15

Notes: Seeding rates for ~20” rows might be intermediate in lbs./A.

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which may affect achieving a stand. Stemminess can be controlled with slightly higher seeding rates though lodging could become a problem for some forage types and hybrids including the brown mid-rib (BMR) forages. Most forages, including BMRs (lower lignin content thus a softer stem), have little to no lodging potential until the forage heads out. Texas AgriLife-Amarillo data report that some BMR sorghum/sudans and particularly forage sorghums may lodge badly once headed. This is a problem for silage harvest. Due to lodging potential, seeding rates and applied N levels might be more conservative for lower-quality forage hay (i.e., headed out vs. the highest quality forage hayed at boot stage) and silage. Seeding rates are usually slightly higher for grazing vs. hay or silage production.

### **Why are some sorghum/sudan seeding rate recommendations so high?**

This is a common question among producers. It is not uncommon, even in the South Plains to find some suggested sorghum/sudan seeding rates at half a bag or more for dryland, and a bag for irrigated. Some producers simply like finer stems and the potentially higher quality that might be associated with them. BMR forages, however, are more likely to retain higher quality without a reduction in stem size. Producers well to the east of Lubbock where rainfall is higher may drill 40-50 lbs./A on dryland (annual precipitation ~25" and more) because they want finer stems that will dry more quickly and hopefully be less likely to get rained on while awaiting drydown.

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