Epic - a new variety of tall fescue

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Grass cultivar testing at Wrightson Research Centre, in the south-east of South Australia, has identified a tall fescue cultivar with a different growth pattern from Demeter, the cultivar presently widely used in Australia.

Once established the new cultivar has a much greater winter production, while being more summer dormant than Demeter. It is an overseas proprietary cultivar and has been named EPIC (Registered Trade Mark). It was commercially released on a trial basis in autumn, 1981.

This paper summarizes the experimental evidence comparing the two varieties.

Methods

Two trials were sown in June, 1979, on a sandy loam (0-30cm) over heavy clay soil. One trial was irrigated as needed to maintain good soil moisture throughout and received high levels of fertilizer. Both trials were maintained as monospecific swards by the use of herbicides.

Yields were measured regularly in both trials using a flail cut mower. The trials were mown off and the forage removed after each yield cut. The yields were averaged on a seasonal basis over two years.

Results and Discussion

The differing seasonal growth patterns are shown in the irrigated trial (table 1). Demeter had a higher total production because of its better spring and summer growth. However, in the dryland trial, with soil moisture limiting growth in late spring and summer, the only significant difference in the yield of the two varieties was in winter, when EPIC made twice as much growth as Demeter.

Table 1 Seasonal Yields. Two-Year Average. Dry matter t ha^{-1}

Trial	Cultivar	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	Total
Irrigated	Epic	2.19	0.54	2.52	2.94**	8.18
	Demeter	3.56**	2.93**	2.57	1.41	10.47**
Dryland	Epic	0.78	0.01	0.03	2.08**	2.90
	Demeter	1.16	0.03	0.05	1.04	2.27

** Yield significantly greater (P=.01)

More trials have been sown in 1981 to evaluate EPIC further and a seed production area has been sown in Victoria. A questionnaire has been sent to farmers who have bought seed and from the replies received the performance of the cultivar under actual farm conditions will be evaluated.