

SEED PRICES FOR 2012 & A NEW RYEGRASS

For the past couple of years, purchasers of turfgrass seed have enjoyed the consequences of larger supply inventories and reduced demand (at least stateside). And as we all know, in the world of commodity pricing, what goes down eventually heads back up.

FORCES AFFECTING PRICING FOR 2012 INCLUDE:

- Shrinking inventories. Growers report their excess inventories are gone.
- Slowly increasing demand continent-wide (Cnd. market has remained strong).
- Production changes. A portion of the acreage that was devoted previously to turfgrass seed production has moved to agricultural crops such as wheat and other grains. Quite simply, farmers are going to grow crops that provide a better return, and grains are now outpacing returns over turfgrass seed.

As a result, our industry can expect price increases ranging from 5-15%. Of course, the Canadian dollar versus the American greenback will also play a factor for those varieties grown in the US.

INTRODUCING NATURAL KNIT™. Perennial ryegrass has consistently been an important component of a sports turf manager's management regime. The introduction of stoloniferous ryegrass adds a new twist in keeping the centres of your fields from succumbing to the pressures of daily use.

Natural Knit™ spreading perennial ryegrass sends out pseudo-stolons from the base of the mother plant, either running at or just below the soil surface. One breeder reported stolons measuring several feet in length. Stolon production begins after vernalization (induction of the flowering stage), and this is important to remember when setting expectations. There can be a huge variance in the percentage of plants that send out the stolons. Numbers can be as low as 11% and as high as 100%, so due diligence is necessary when sourcing this seed.

Test data showed a marked improvement in turfgrass quality in high traffic environments. Seed size is smaller than traditional rye, resulting in a higher count per pound of product. Numbers reported are 268,000/lb vs. traditional rye at 247,000/lb. Natural Knit has been shown to be rather aggressive, and in a sports




field situation, this can be a very good characteristic when a manager is struggling to keep turf in a goalmouth or down the middle. One breeder reports his cultivar has outstanding rust resistance as well. And, despite the stoloniferous reproduction, there is no thatch development.

Finally, winter hardiness has traditionally been a question mark for ryegrasses, and there is no indication at this point about any improvement in this area. Still, in a regular overseeding program, a 100% application of Natural Knit, or a blend with it, could improve turf quality in high traffic situations.

Contact your seed supplier this winter for further information.

— Ken Pavely, LawnLife Natural Turf Products

Editor's Note: Look for what's new in turf species at the 2012 Ontario Turfgrass Symposium; in sessions and in the concourse with our sponsor companies.



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