

**THE POTENTIAL OF TEFF AS AN ALTERNATIVE SUMMER FORAGE TO MANAGE
DROUGHT CONDITIONS IN THE MID-ATLANTIC REGION**

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Summary

Teff (*Eragrostis tef* (Zucc.)) is a productive, fast-growing, warm-season annual grass that is gaining the interest of forage producers throughout the southeastern United States. Teff is adapted to a wide range of climatic and soil conditions and has shown several advantages that make it a viable alternative over other summer annual forages. These advantages include its ability to thrive both in moisture-stressed and waterlogged soils and its lack of anti-quality compounds as found in sorghum-related annuals. Teff is a bunch-type grass. Despite its small seed size, it germinates within 3-5 days and is an aggressive competitor once established. In its native habitat in Ethiopia, maximum production occurs with a growing season rainfall of 43-56 cm (17 to 22 inches) and a temperature range of 10- 29°C (50 to 85°F). Historically, annual warm-season forages such as sorghum, sudangrass and pearl millet have been used to “fill in” the summer slump, because they grow well under hot, dry conditions. However, their growth and morphological characteristics often makes these species difficult to manage for grazing and hay production. Alternative summer annual crops such as teff may be preferred for livestock or hay production, because of greater management ease and high productivity. Additionally, unlike many other grasses including warm season annuals, Teff can grow with minimal to no nitrogen (N) input and can have harvestable crop within 35-40 days compared to millets’ 60-75 days. Although teff has great potential for grazing and hay production, growers need more information about its management. Currently, little information is available about teff’s establishment, productivity, persistence, cultivar variation, response to cutting, and fertilization.