

Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars

A. Grasses

1. Cocksfoot

Dactylis glomerata L. (cocksfoot) cv. Aberystwyth S.26

Reg. No. A-1a-5

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Origin

The original S.26 was developed by the Welsh Plant Breeding Station, Aberystwyth, from five naturally occurring plants found in a patch of gorse in Devon. The present reconstituted S.26 is based in part on derivatives from the old cultivar. The reconstituted S.26 is similar to the original form, except that it is rather later in coming into head (4, 5). The characteristics of this cultivar are maintained under a pedigree certification scheme. The Welsh Plant Breeding Station regularly supplies breeder's seed to the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, Cambridge. The Institute produces basic seed from this breeder's seed and distributes it for the production of certified seed. All certified seed is therefore only one generation removed from official basic seed (5).

Morphological description (1 5, 7)

S.26 is intermediate in type between S.37 and S.143 and forms large tussocks which are leafy and persistent. It tillers more profusely than Danish and other similar European cocksfoots. It has green leaves which are a little broader than Grasslands Apanui and softer to the touch than Brignoles. Its tillers are not as large nor as flattened as in Currie. Its seeds are relatively large, averaging about 920,000 per kg.

Agronomic characters (1-7)

S.26, like other north European cultivars, has a high degree of winter dormancy but a very low capacity for summer dormancy. It is therefore unable to withstand summer drought and requires a long growing season with a reasonably good, well distributed annual rainfall or irrigation and comparatively mild summer temperatures.

In England it is regarded as a pasture hay type. It commences growth late in spring and spring growth is below average; it flowers late, about the same time as Grasslands Apanui, and continues growth later in the autumn, and remains greener in late autumn and early winter, longer than the earlier varieties and also S.143. It also persists well under grazing. In Scotland it is reported to behave very like S.143, giving poor spring but better summer and autumn production than the early cultivars (3).

Australian experience reports S.26 to have much less seedling vigour than Brignoles or Currie and slightly less than Grasslands Apanui but a little more than S.143 (7). In Tasmania under satisfactory summer rainfall it gives higher yields in summer than any other cultivar, but its winter, early spring, and autumn production are comparatively low (7). In Victoria, although S.26 is grown quite extensively in the higher rainfall areas, experience shows it is slightly less productive than Grasslands Ruanui especially in the winter (2). Under irrigation at Milang in South Australia it was more productive than Currie during late spring and summer but less productive in autumn, winter, and early spring, and did best on light well drained soils (6).

References

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