

# Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars

## A. Grasses

### 4. Fescue

#### *Festuca arundinacea* Schreb. (tall fescue) cv. Melik

Reg. No. A-4a-5

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#### Origin

Derived from C.P.I.15301, which was collected by J.F. Miles and C.M. Donald in Israel in 1951 in the Wadi Melik in Israel. It was grown in Plant Introduction Nurseries at Kelmscott and Kojonup from 1956 onwards, where it showed unusual vigour in late autumn and winter. It was included in cutting trials in 1958 where it produced well and survived over several summers (1). Subsequent trials (2) indicated outstanding winter production compared with *Phalaris tuberosa*, *Lolium perenne*, *Dactylis glomerata*, and *Festuca elatior*. The persistence and winter productivity were confirmed in later trials at Kojonup and Mt. Barker. In 1965 approx. 1 kg of seed was released to Mr. J. Peters, Petersfield, Mt. Barker, for field trial and seed increase.

Submitted for registration by the Department of Agriculture of Western Australia and recommended for registration by the Western Australian Herbage Plant Liaison Committee. Registered November 1971.

#### Morphological description

Melik is an erect-growing variety which develops a comparatively small crown. The leaves are long (to 40cm), narrow (9-15 mm), and relatively soft. The seedling culms may attain a height of 2m. At Kojonup heading commences in mid-September and seed may be ripe by mid-December.

It differs from Demeter in more erect growth, narrower leaves, somewhat smaller crowns, and a paler green colour.

#### Agronomic characters

Melik is summer-dormant, drought-tolerant and can withstand waterlogging during winter with no indication of nutritional stress common to other perennial grasses in similar conditions.

It is adapted to the lower-lying shallow soils, often subject to winter waterlogging of the medium rainfall areas of south-western Australia. It is palatable when green but not so readily eaten when dry, only the leaves being eaten.

Its main advantages are its persistence and production of high dry matter forage in the autumn and winter.

#### References

1. Bailey, E.T., and Rogers, A.L. (1965). Trials with *Festuca* spp. in Western Australia. CSIRO Aust. Div. Pl. Ind. Fld. Sta. Rec. No. 4(1), pp. 25-34.
2. Rogers, A.L., and Beresford, J.D. (1970). Winter production and persistence of selected perennial grasses in the medium rainfall region of south-western Australia. CSIRO Aust. Div. Pl. Ind. Fld. Sta. Rec. No. 9(2), pp. 85-92.