

# Forage Extension Program

## Cereal Forages

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Large acreages of wheat, oat, and rye were utilized in the early 20th century prior to the advent of power farm implements. For about five decades, harvested cereal forages declined to low levels, but have recently resurged to about 300,000 acres in Montana. Spring cereals – predominantly barley – are mostly used. Hooded varieties such as Haybet, 'Westford', 'Stockford', 'Hays' and others are widely planted. Depending on location and precipitation, dryland barley can produce 1 to 3 tons of hay per acre – equivalent to or more than an old alfalfa that it replaced (under irrigation, from 3 to over 4 tons of hay per acre).

The Montana Agriculture Experiment Station (MAES) has tested many winter cereals (awnless or short-awned wheat or triticale). These winter cereals are consistently more productive than spring cereals (2 to over 5 tons of hay per acre). 'Willow Creek' is a new awnless winter wheat that is very popular. In forage quality and feeding trials, Willow Creek and winter cereals are slightly inferior to barley. For most of Montana, we now have two excellent options (winter or spring cereals) to use when old alfalfa or permanent pasture is renovated for two years.

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