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Forage Producers Tech Guide: Grain Production in Forage Sorghum Silage

Grain sorghum producers are aware that hybrids differ considerably in their ability to produce and fill a grain head under drought stress. BMR forage sorghums also exhibit differences from hybrid to hybrid.



Pictured is Canex BMR 310 on the right with good grain head formation and Dividend BMR with very poor grain head formation to the left. This is a dryland field in Gray County Kansas in 2002, a very dry year. A rain in August has caused the Dividend BMR to exert some new "sucker heads" shortly before this picture was taken. Sucker heads are poorly exerted and are green.

How important is grain head formation for silage production? If the producer wishes to make a high-energy silage we believe that grain in the silage is of great importance. To better understand this issue please reference the SBSC Forage Producers Tech Guide: A Comparison of the Feed Value of the Components of Forage Plants.

A forage sorghum's ability to produce grain is also affected by the plant population. The plant population which is desirable for grazing or for dry hay production, is generally much higher than that which is desirable for silage where grain production is considered important. When producing forage sorghum silage with high grain content, producers should use a plant population equal to or slightly higher than the population which would be considered optimum for grain sorghum production in the same field. Plant population significantly lower than those used with grazing or hay production will generally produce more grain since the individual plants are less crowded.