Just mentioning the word “crabgrass” can make some agricultural producers and landowners cringe and mutter disapprovingly, while others smile and nod with approval.

Crabgrass is an annual, warm-season grass that is fast-growing, easy to establish, and capable of natural and prolific reseeding, all traits that allow it to excel as a “weed.” Despite its bad reputation, crabgrass was originally used in Europe as fodder before being introduced in the United States, probably in the mid-1800s, as a forage for grazing livestock.

The Noble Research Institute has been conducting research on crabgrass for many years.

In 1988, the Noble Research Institute (then called the Noble Foundation) was the first to publicly release a crabgrass cultivar, Red River. Over the years, Red River became the main commercial crabgrass cultivar and helped crabgrass gain acceptance as an important warm-season, high-yielding, and with improved nutritive quality and good reseeding ability.

Impact crabgrass was released for forage livestock producers needing a later-maturing cultivar than Red River but one that is also broadly adapted, high-yielding, and with improved nutritive quality and good reseeding ability.

Impact crabgrass grows in Enid, Oklahoma, in 2016.

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annual grass for forage and livestock operations initially in the Southern Great Plains and now throughout the southern United States. However, a limitation of Red River was its early seed-heading date, which increased maturity and reduced the quality and quantity of late-summer forage.

Recently, Noble plant breeders developed a new crabgrass cultivar called Impact. Impact crabgrass was released for forage livestock producers needing a later-maturing cultivar than Red River but one that is also broadly adapted, high-yielding, and with improved nutritive quality and good reseeding ability.

Impact crabgrass (left), on average, heads out 10 days later than Red River (right), resulting in later maturity and improved forage quality.

In Noble’s grazing systems research trials, steers grazing Impact crabgrass averaged 1.56 pounds per day of weight gain and 192 pounds of live weight gain per acre during a five-year period (2013-2018) following graze-out wheat.

Impact has an adaptation area that includes the south-central and southeastern United States. It is particularly productive in dryland situations, but it also performs well under irrigation. Green chop, silage and hay production are also potential uses of Impact. It is adapted to both tilled and no-till forage livestock production systems. Impact crabgrass seed is available from Barenbrug USA.