

## Thomas, Scott E (DOT)

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**From:** Kavalok, Tony (DFG)  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 29, 2016 10:11 AM  
**To:** Jeffers, Jefferson C (DOT)  
**Subject:** RE: Question for WHWG - Moose un-friendly grass seed mix

Jeff,

Recommended grasses according to our Range and Habitat Specialist, Dr. Bill Collins are as follows:

- Arctic Red Fescue – far and above the best species, very hardy, grows a good mat in very droughty dry soils like gravel / sand road shoulders
- Bering Hair Grass – very limited availability, good choice but probably very expensive
- Timothy – readily available, needs more organic material, topsoil, or peat in the surface material for water / moisture retention
- Smooth Brome – same as Timothy, good selection to put with Red Fescue if a multiple species mix is desired
- Blue Grass – like standard lawn grass, good but needs organics and traditional soil prep to establish effectively, not good in droughty soils (e.g., road corridors and shoulders)
- Wheat grasses – several different species, readily available (at least in the lower 48 and Canada), hardy, tough cool season species but not as good as Red Fescue for most places in AK

Moose will graze on any and all of these grasses under the right conditions but generally only for a short period in the spring during the first few weeks of green-up and occasionally in the fall when other species have gone dormant or are otherwise less palatable or available. There are no known available grasses that are completely immune to grazing by moose at some point in their annual life cycle, but Arctic Red Fescue provides the best overall choice for the applications you are looking for.

Hope this helps.

Tony Kavalok, Assistant Director  
Division of Wildlife Conservation  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Office (907) 861-2103 Fax (907) 861-2121

[tony.kavalok@alaska.gov](mailto:tony.kavalok@alaska.gov)

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**From:** Jeffers, Jefferson C (DOT)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 28, 2016 9:04 AM  
**To:** Kavalok, Tony (DFG)  
**Cc:** Horne, Taylor C (DOT); Farr, Clint J (DOT); Benkert, Ronald C (DFG); Burch, Mark E (DFG)  
**Subject:** RE: Question for WHWG - Moose un-friendly grass seed mix

Thanks, Tony. I appreciate you taking time to address these questions.  
Jeff.

Jeff. C Jeffers  
Alaska DOT&PF  
Standard Specifications  
907-465-6951

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**From:** Kavalok, Tony (DFG)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 28, 2016 6:19 AM  
**To:** Jeffers, Jefferson C (DOT)  
**Cc:** Horne, Taylor C (DOT); Farr, Clint J (DOT); Benkert, Ronald C (DFG); Burch, Mark E (DFG)  
**Subject:** RE: Question for WHWG - Moose un-friendly grass seed mix

SEE BELOW – call if you have questions. TK

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**From:** Jeffers, Jefferson C (DOT)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 27, 2016 3:21 PM  
**To:** Benkert, Ronald C (DFG); Kavalok, Tony (DFG); Burch, Mark E (DFG)  
**Cc:** Horne, Taylor C (DOT); Farr, Clint J (DOT)  
**Subject:** Question for WHWG - Moose un-friendly grass seed mix

WHWG guys:

Our Central Region staff is trying to validate they have a “moose un-friendly” grass seed mix for roadside erosion control. Seeding is a requirement during road construction. The region is trying to ensure they’ve done what they can do to make the grass mix as unfriendly to moose as they can.

This email is in the hope of clarifying whether sewing specific grass species should be a source of angst for the DOT. Central Region will contact DNR’s Palmer Plant Materials section to ask some specific technical questions. But I have a more general question (okay, several questions) for a habitat or wildlife biologist with moose knowledge.

Is grass really moose food? Can roadside grass be an attractant? **No, “grass” is not considered moose food. Moose are considered to be browsers – especially of seral stage brush and forest habitat types. Roadside grass would only be an attractant during the very early growth period for new grass or in the spring when the vegetation is succulent and contains lots of water.**

Is this just a passing issue with the sprouting of new grass? **Yes, however there is always some “new” grass coming up in the spring even when the stand is older and well established.**

If it is a new sprout issue, is it likely to be avoidable by selecting grass species? **Possibly, but I will have to check with ADF&G staff that would have more knowledge of moose relative preference or avoidance for specific plant species – I will get back to you.**

Thanks to all of you.  
Jeff.

Background:

I seem to recall a story about the Trunk Road in Wasilla where Tony mentioned moose were eating the very most tender first shoots as the seeding sprouted. However, once the grass matured moose ceased to be interested. Also, I recall that in general, moose are not grass eaters.

Central Region has a grass seed specification that includes a mix of three grasses and one optional substitute. The statewide specification lists 13 species and a sproutable seed % for each, but no mixture. Just one of the four Central Region grasses is not include on the statewide list. I could provide the grass species, but I hope that you won’t spend much time on this.

Jeff. C Jeffers  
Alaska DOT&PF  
Standard Specifications  
907-465-6951