

Ubon paspalum

Scientific name: *Paspalum atratum* cv. Ubon

Common name: Ubon paspalum

Productivity: In Thailand on low fertility, waterlogged soils, Ubon paspalum produces between 20 and 30 t/dry matter per hectare/year. 70% is produced in the 6 month wet season and 30% in the 6 month dry season under no irrigation. Ubon paspalum is not drought tolerant but it is very tolerant of waterlogging. It will survive short periods of flooding.

Crude protein levels: 5-8% crude protein in Thailand on poor wet soils and 8-10 % crude protein on better soils in Vietnam.

Animal production: Data from Thailand, showed that young steers grazing Ubon paspalum had an average daily weight gain of 0.5 kg eating only grass. Despite having relatively low crude protein levels compared to other grasses, cattle gain weight because Ubon paspalum is very leafy and highly digestible.

Grazing management: Can be either rotationally grazed or set stocked. Management depends on the farmer's experience. Therefore cut every 40-45 days in the wet season and 60-70 days in the cool season. It is important to cut Ubon paspalum frequently. If it becomes too mature and old (more than 50 days in the wet season and 70 days in the dry season), it becomes very unpalatable because of low nitrogen levels and high stem content. Cattle will refuse to eat it. Farmers then they the grass is no good.

Establishment: Can be either planted in rows, 50 cm apart, or broadcast sown at 10-12 kg/ha. Sow the seed on to the soil surface, brush the seed with soil by using tree branches or large brooms. Bury the seed no more than 1-2 cm under the soil.

Background: Ubon paspalum (*Paspalum atratum*) was the first species we studied in depth. Ubon paspalum is a wild species native to the states of Mato Grosso do Sul, Goias and Minas Gerais in central-western Brazil. An accession of this wild species, BRA 009610, was originally collected near the village of Terenos, Mato Grosso do Sul State, Brazil, by Dr. J. Valls in April 1986. Small amounts of seed were subsequently distributed to research institutions in Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Florida and the Philippines.

In November 1994, Ubon Ratchathani University received 100 grams of BRA 009610 from Dr. Werner Stur of the Forages for Smallholders Project based at IRRI, Philippines [a project funded by AustAid and managed by CSIRO (Australia) and CIAT (Colombia)]. Fifty grams of this seed were used for the initial evaluation research and the other 50 grams were used for seed multiplication.

Following 3 years of evaluation work in Northeast Thailand, *P. atratum* was consistently found to be the best grass on seasonally wet-seasonally dry soils and in 1997 it was released for forage use by Ubon Ratchathani University as cultivar Ubon. It has also been released in Florida as cultivar Suerte atra paspalum, in Australia as cultivar Hi-Gane (Loch and Ferguson 1999), in Argentina as cultivar Camba FCA and in the Philippines as cultivar Terenos.





