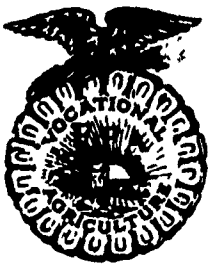


From Local Ag Teachers:



Thoughts in Passing



The article this week was prepared by Glenn L. Spangler, teacher of agriculture at Manheim

Central High School. Managing Forage Crops With today's protein prices, it pays to properly

manage your forage crops. With good management practices you can increase the yearly per acre value from \$200-acre to over \$300-acre.

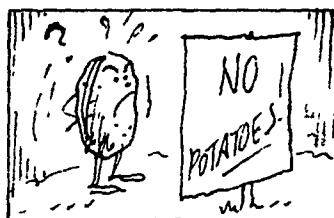
Right now is one of the most critical times of the year for forage management. With first cuttings of alfalfa being completed it is time to seriously consider topdressing your fields. An 0-35-105 applied, both after first cutting and in the fall can help to change an average 3 ton-acre yield to a 5 ton-acre yield. Also 2 pounds of boron per year should be applied to increase yield. Phosphorous level is of special importance, because low levels are a major reason for low yields. Also by splitting the fertilizer application potash can be used more efficiently.

Besides fertilization, there are other management practices which will help you. Insect control is becoming a major problem this year in alfalfa. Many fields will have to be sprayed for alfalfa weevil. Later this season you should check your field for leaf hoppers. Weeds are also problems in many fields. Measures should be taken to control weeds especially in new seedings, because they will rob your alfalfa and forage grasses of water, nutrients and return a poorer quality product.

Timing of cutting is important for two reasons. Protein content drops as both legumes and grasses mature. While in the bud stage alfalfa's protein is near 20 percent and it drops to 16 percent in the full bloom stage. Likewise, grasses protein drops from 18 percent in the vegetative stage to 7 percent in the dough stage. Considering only first cutting, 50 pounds of actual protein per acre is lost by waiting from 1-10th bloom to full bloom to cut your alfalfa. The loss of protein per acre by waiting to cut grasses would be much greater. Secondly alfalfa should not be cut too early. Cutting too early decreases yield, but more important is the fact that it depletes the root reserves. Subsequently this will increase the chances of loss due to winter kill and insect and disease damage.

Things to Remember When Managing Forage Crops

1. Topdress alfalfa with an 0-70-210 and 2 pounds of boron split after first cutting and in the fall. Topdress fields with less than 30 percent alfalfa with a 50-50-50 in the spring. Note: (When seeding a field to forage take a soil test and make certain that pH is at the correct level; otherwise fertilizers will not be as available).
2. Harvest alfalfa in very early or early bloom stage. Grasses just as heads are emerging from the boot.
3. Check fields for insects and use proper control measures.
4. Control weeds to maintain quality forage.



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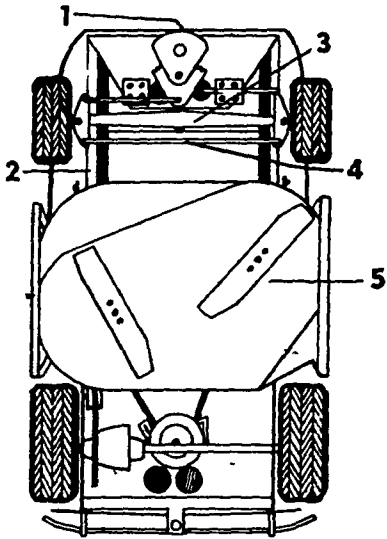
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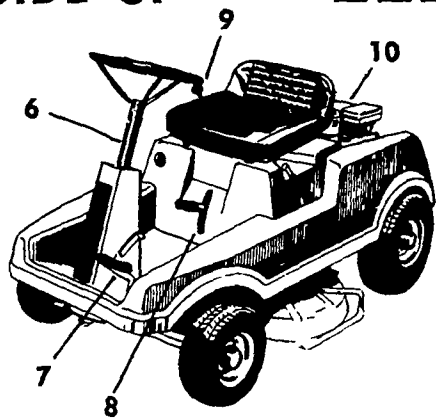
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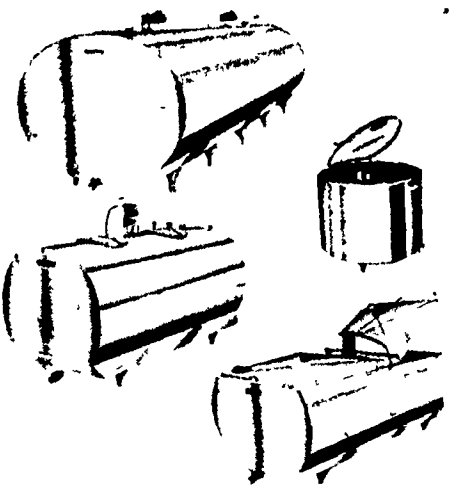
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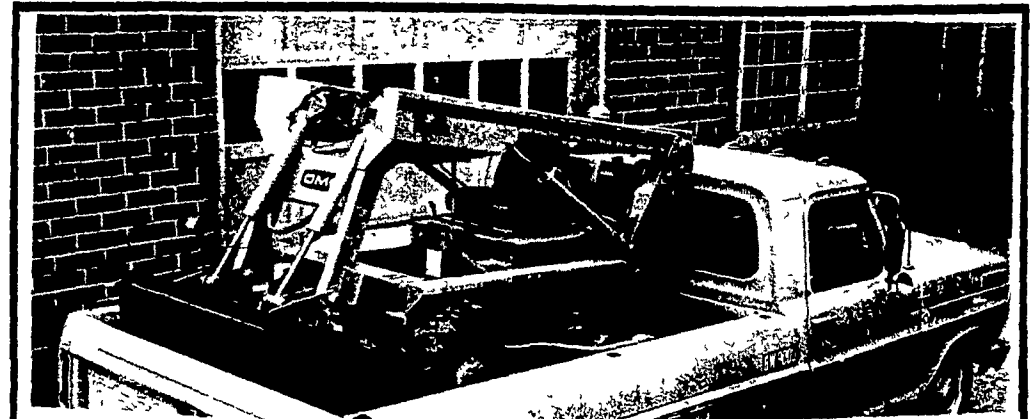
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