

# How to add \$75 value to new alfalfa seedings

OLEY — Getting control of potato leafhopper in your newly seeded alfalfa this spring could return almost four times the cost of control. There's a relatively new way of getting control which has a lot of alfalfa producers who've tried it excited.

The system calls for application of a systemic insecticide for leafhopper right at seeding time — which means farmers won't have

to go back over delicate new stands with a sprayer. Presently only one insecticide, Furadan, is registered for this application.

"For insect control you have to get the spray on when the problem occurs," points out Penn State Agronomist Bill McClellan. "A trip with a sprayer will often leave wheel tracks in newly seeded alfalfa that

will be there for the four or five year life of that stand.

"And I personally hate to go over a new alfalfa stand with a sprayer," McClellan adds "So the seeding time treatment offers an alternative."

Studies in Pennsylvania show roughly 0.35 ton extra alfalfa yield on new cuttings treated at planting time for leafhopper. Other tests showed sharply higher results, up to near three-quarter ton.

"That will add up to about \$75 extra return in the first year. The value of pure alfalfa in the first year is about \$85 per ton, with an average of two to three cuttings in the first year," FMC Northeastern Service Director Sue Wendler says.

Plus, the cost of the insecticide application is almost saved by reduced seeding rates, she points out. "At seed prices today, the savings will be about \$16 or more, since the seeding rate can usually be cut in half."

But what if the leafhopper doesn't show up?

"In some parts of the state nine years out of ten you can expect leafhopper," points out Stan Gesell, Penn State Extension entomologist.

Generally the hottest area is here in the south central part of Pennsylvania. The new seeding practice is also recently registered for use in Maryland alfalfa.

"Leafhopper can almost kill a stand, so if I were a grower in that area I know what I'd do," Gesell says.

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With up to five cuttings per season on his alfalfa, Eugene Moser, Oley, is especially concerned about new stand establishment. It's the key to high production, he feels.



Leafhopper control can be a key part of establishing new alfalfa stands, contends Ross Orner, Jr., Rockton.



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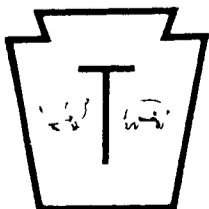
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