

# Use good alfalfa seed & put more in silo, Baylor says

**BY DICK ANGLESTEIN**  
**CAMP HILL** — Farmers shouldn't practice false economy and cut corners on alfalfa seed costs and should be prepared to continue a management program trend of putting more crop into the silo than into the bale, a Penn State hay expert advised Tuesday.

These were among points stressed by John E. Baylor, professor of agronomy extension at Penn State, as he discussed Pennsylvania's Alfalfa Growers Program at a seed symposium conducted Tuesday at the Penn Harris Motor Inn by Beachley-Hardy Seed Company, of Shiremanstown.

"Our studies over the past four years have shown that alfalfa seed costs only represent about three percent of total production expenses," Baylor said.

"But when good seed can represent an increased return of 15 to 20 percent in higher yield, this shows that seed purchases are not the place to cut corners."

Baylor cited the other production costs determined in a study of state alfalfa growers. The biggest cost is machinery at 39 percent.

"Machinery represents the highest cost," Baylor said.

"Often it's high priced machinery being used on too few acres."

Other costs are fertility and lime, 20 percent; labor, 17 percent; and land, 17 percent.

Overall production costs from 1977 to 1980 have increased from \$200 to \$295 an acre. The break-even yield has jumped from 2.8 to 3.7 tons an acre for a 14 percent hike per year over the four years.

Baylor said that 1981 has once again shown that farmers must place more stress on putting their alfalfa in the silo as haylage over baling it if they are to get the most efficiency from their fields.

"This year again was not ideal for making hay," Baylor said.

"One or more cuttings must be

put in the silo because it's necessary due to climactic conditions to get the hay off the land and into storage.

"We just can't let it lay out there and prevent the crop from utilizing the sun for regrowth."

Returning to the findings in the Pa. Alfalfa Growers Program, Baylor said yields in the survey were in the five and one-half to six ton per acre range. And tops has been 9.1 tons.

In the mineral uptake portion of the study, it was found that potash removal totaled some 700 pounds per acre.

"This shows the need for a good, sound fertility program with applications of potash," Baylor said.

Other mineral uptake figures show 88 pounds of phosphate per acre, 130 pounds of calcium, 22 pounds of manganese and 24 pounds of sulphur.

Best yields were found on limestone soils, but good production was achieved on lesser shale soils, too. A lot of manure was used in the rotation.

Top farmers seeded in the spring with no companion crop. Chemical control was utilized, along with a good seeding rate.

Most of the growers had four and some five cuttings. Cutting intervals showed the first coming off at the bud stage, the second 35 to 37 days later, the third at 37 to 40 days later and the fourth was variable.

The length of alfalfa stands in the study ranged from 3.7 to 4 years.

A rosy outlook for the future of alfalfa was painted by Dean Urmston, vice president and director of marketing for W-L Research, Inc., of Bakersfield, Calif.

"A survey of major growers in the top 11 alfalfa producing states has shown an expected 10 percent increase in alfalfa acreage by 1990," Urmston said.

The survey was outlined at the recent Certified Alfalfa Seed Symposium held in Wisconsin.



Participants in the Beachley-Hardy Seed Company Symposium Tuesday at the Penn Harris Motor Inn include, from the left, David Urmston, vice-president of W-L Research, Inc.; Kenneth Beachley and John Baylor, extension agronomist at Penn State.

Urmston cited four reasons for the anticipated increase in alfalfa acreage.

First, alfalfa is energy efficient. A stand lasts three to five years as compared to annual plantings.

Alfalfa fits ideally into soil conservation programs, which are going to receive increasing governmental concern. Alfalfa puts nitrogen back into the soil and the merits of alfalfa silage over corn silage are starting to be shown.

"A Wisconsin study has shown that dairymen can make more money and more milk with alfalfa silage," Urmston said.

A. A. Hanson, director of

research for W-L Research, Inc., called on basic research in the public sector to be directed at more practical ends.

W-L is continuing to expand its alfalfa seed research, now having research facilities in 3 states, comprising some 130 acres of test plots.

Persistence and length of stands will continue to become more important due to energy costs, the researcher emphasized.

Joseph Graham, of W-L Research, stressed the need for attention to what he called the minor alfalfa diseases, such as rhizoctonia.

He explained that W-L has followed a breeding program of developing resistance to these diseases, as well as the more major ones.

Verticillium wilt is expected to spread farther eastward, he said, but should remain north of Pennsylvania, unless the fungus un-

dergoes a basic change.

Corn production was also discussed at the symposium attended by some 150 Beachley-Hardy dealers from Pennsylvania and other parts of the Northeast.

Participants in a panel discussion included Clarence Kreider, of Richland; Wendell Judson, of Columbia Cross Roads; Wayne Kauffaman, Mt. Pleasant Mills; and Paul Roth, of Prospect.

Howard Goss and Kenneth Beachley, of Beachley-Hardy, also addressed and welcomed the group to the session at the Penn Harris.



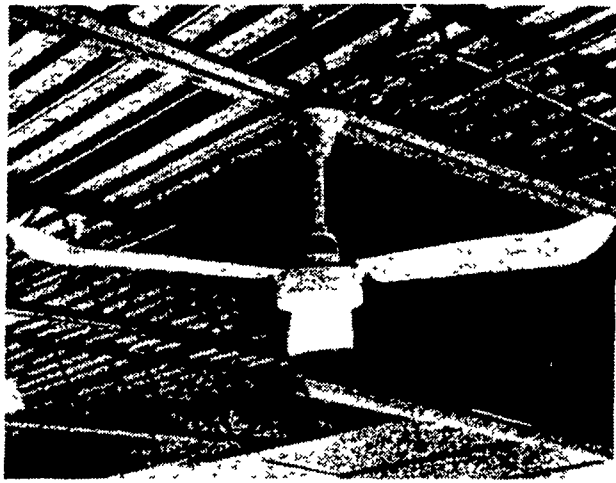
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