

## Fertilizer needs for summer seeding

KALAMAZOO, Mich. — Now is the time of year to remind alfalfa growers of their fertilizer needs for a late summer alfalfa seeding.

Soil pH and fertility are important for a good stand of alfalfa, points out Darel Zook, Asgrow/O's Gold alfalfa and forage mixes product manager. "Alfalfa requires a soil pH of nearly 7 for optimum stand establishment, and

lime should be applied in time to react with the soil before the seed is planted," Zook says.

He also says that phosphorus and potassium are essential for a good stand of alfalfa.

"A readily available supply of phosphorus within reach of the young root is required for normal root development, and a banded application at seeding time is

recommended." Zook says care should be taken to avoid direct contact between seed and fertilizer because of potential damage to inoculum bacteria.

"Potassium is essential to forage production also," Zook notes. "Proper potassium fertilization helps ensure maximum disease resistance, winter survival, and crude protein production.

Inadequate potassium allows grasses to take over."

Critical last dates for summer seedings in northern states are early to mid-August, Zook says. Further south, the last safe seeding date ranges from late August near Des Moines, Iowa, to mid-September in the St. Louis, Missouri, area. "The earlier seeded stands of alfalfa are generally the most vigorous and successful," he says.

The small size of alfalfa seed makes it very important to have a smooth, firm seedbed to maximize seed to soil contact. Planting rates vary from between 12-16 pounds when direct seeding in favorable conditions, up to 22 pounds in tough

seeding conditions such as interseeding and no-till. Planting depth can range from 1/4 of an inch in heavy soils to an inch deep in lighter soils, Zook advises.

Zook says fertilizer dealers can make farmers aware of the advantages of late summer seedings, as well as advise them of the potash and phosphorus needs of a fall seeding.

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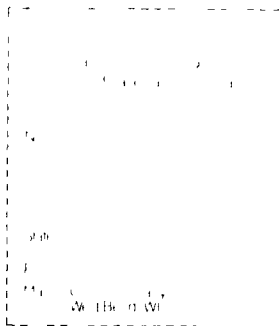
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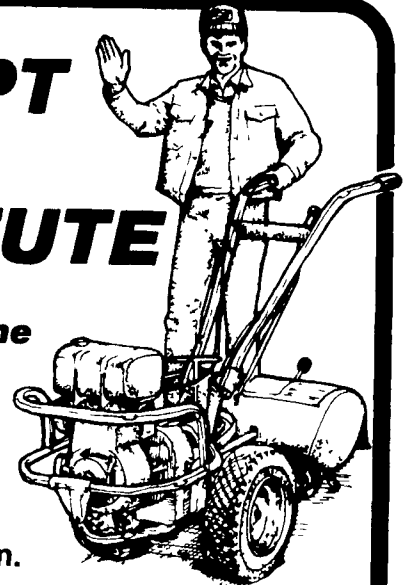
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