

## Foraging Around



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### It's Seeding Time Again

For most alfalfa growers in the northeast, weather conditions in April and May were most unfavorable for establishing new stands of this important forage legume. As a result many farmers will be making new seedings during much of the month of August.

While spring seedings have continued to become more common in this area, primarily because of our corn and alfalfa rotations, August is an excellent time to seed - if you pay attention to the principles of good forage establishment. While lack of moisture and high temperatures occasionally cause a concern, insect and weed problems are usually minimized for these late summer seedings.

Steps to a successful summer seeding without going into a great deal of detail here are what I consider to be some of the most important steps to a successful August seeding.

1. Choose quality seed of a high performance alfalfa variety. Include a grass such as perennial ryegrass or orchardgrass if an alfalfa-grass mixture fits into your program.

2. Be sure you have an up-to-date soil test for the field to be seeded - then lime and fertilizer according to test.

3. If you are using a conventional seeding method, grain drill or cultipacker seeder, prepare a firm seedbed to assure uniform, shallow seed placement and a good moisture relationship in the zone of the germinating seed. Cultipack both before and after seeding if necessary. This can be critical for a seeding made in August and is important for spring seedings as well.

4. Be sure your alfalfa seed is properly inoculated when it is seeded. Seed that was pre-inoculated last winter is likely to be satisfactory if it was properly stored. However, inoculating with fresh inoculant just prior to seeding is still good insurance for an August seeding.

5. Sow seed shallow and don't skimp on seed, at least 15 pounds per acre if seeding alfalfa in pure stands, 10-12 pounds if seeded with a grass.

6. As stated previously annual weeds and insects are less likely to be a problem for August seedings. But if they are a problem control them with appropriate pesticides.

So much for conventional seedings. Now let's take a brief look at a couple of newer seeding techniques that show tremendous promise.

### No-Till Stubble Seedings

In Pennsylvania and surrounding states seeding alfalfa in small grain stubble using the no-tillage technique has proven to be an excellent method of forage establishment. The small grain stubble left after harvest and removal of the straw usually provides an excellent mulch and ideal moisture conditions for germination. And, of course, erosion is reduced to a minimum.

### Fluid or Suspension Seedings

This is one of the newest techniques for seeding alfalfa now available to many northeastern alfalfa growers. As the name implies fluid seeding is a method for sowing alfalfa in a liquid suspension, either solution fertilizers or water, through special nozzles. Because of the special equipment involved fluid seeding is limited to custom application, and, thus, is not available to everyone. However, it does provide a rapid, near fool-proof method of seeding which can be highly beneficial to the busy farmer.

Fluid seeding does not, however, eliminate the need for good seedbed preparation, including a firm seedbed. Most applicators also recommended cultipacking following the seeding operation.

As indicated, fluid seeding is a technique developed by and for custom applicators and fits in well with the fluid fertilizer program. It is not a technique that has been or can be researched in comparison with other seeding techniques. But observations made on dozens of seedings made using this technique in several states convinces me it's a good technique when the grower and applicator follow the recommended procedures.

While I've talked primarily about

late summer seedings of alfalfa this is also a satisfactory time to sow red clover. And late summer is an ideal time to establish many cool season grasses. Grasses such as timothy or bluegrass sown in the late summer or early fall root more deeply because the slower top growth is conducive to better root formation. However,

remember some grass species such as orchardgrass are relatively non-hardy in the seedling stage, while others such as bromegrass and reed canarygrass lack seedling vigor. Thus, these species must be seeded relatively early in August to assure good winter survival.

## Dairying - a source of Keystone pride

HARRISBURG — What better way to idle away a snowy winter day than day-dreaming about your summer vacation? Most people would agree, but in Pennsylvania 15,500 families spend their summer vacations in the hay field and the dairy barn showing their Keystone Pride. For many of these 15,500 farm families, the favorite daydream in August is a cold blustery day.

These folks work twelve months a year, seven days a week to produce quality dairy products for our nutrition and enjoyment. Our 730,000 dairy cows (Holsteins, Brown Swiss, Guernseys, Jerseys, Ayrshires and Milking Shorthorns) lined head to tail would cover 900 miles, three times the distance between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Our dairy families

account for two-fifths of all cash farm income in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania ranks fifth nationwide in the production of fluid milk, and adds \$1.5 billion to the health of our economy.

Milk...our official state beverage, also makes Pennsylvania the second largest producer of frozen dairy products, including ice cream, ice milk and milk sherbet. Add to that cheese, butter and cottage cheeses (Pennsylvania ranks in the top five for all) and the total is Pennsylvania...a major dairy state.

This August, when the summer heat has you beat, take a break with milk, ice cream or your favorite dairy product. Make sure its from Pennsylvania and guaranteed to be fresh.

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