

Foraging Around



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SEEDING OPTIONS FOR FORAGES

Starting soon, weather permitting, farmers will be in the field sowing small seeded legumes and grasses. Red clover and timothy broadcast in winter grains are usually the first to be sown. But other species using a number of seeding techniques will be seeded in rapid order as the season progresses.

Here's another look at several of the seeding options available to you with a judgment as to how successful each technique might be.

Over-Seeding in Winter Grains

The term "seeding on the honey-comb" is frequently used. This refers to seeding a legume or legume/grass mix in an already established crop, usually a winter small grain, in late February or early March during the time when we normally have conditions of alternate freezing and thawing. The common seeding is one of red clover with or without timothy. Of the legumes, you will normally have most success with red and alsike clovers. Seedings of alfalfa in a winter grain are normally marginal at best, and the success rate with birdsfoot trefoil is even less.

Occasionally a farmer will wait until the small grain has started to grow, and soil conditions are favorable, and then sow alfalfa using a grass drill with coulters mounted in front to open the soil slightly. This has resulted in satisfactory stands, especially in more northern areas, but for most situations I'd still consider sowing alfalfa in a winter grain as some-

what risky.

Spring Seedings with Spring Grains

Where oats or other spring grains are used, if possible, choose a grain variety that is short, early maturing, stiff-strawed, and non-lodging, then reduce its seeding rate by one half. Many growers have returned to using a small grain companion crop for purposes of weed control and soil conservation, even though small grains compete with young seedlings for light, moisture, and nutrients.

For best results where a spring grain is used, remove it as green chop, silage or hay just as heads emerge from the boot. Of the legumes, the clovers are the least risk when seeded this way. But with careful management alfalfa can also readily be established successfully. Because of its low seedling vigor and lack of shade tolerance, birdsfoot trefoil is more of a risk. Most cool season grasses can also be sown at this time, although late summer is the "ideal" seeding time for most cool season grasses.

Again in areas of northern Pennsylvania and New York seedings of alfalfa made with mixtures of either oats or spring triticale and peas have been satisfactory. But as you move south, this becomes more risky.

Spring Seedings on a Prepared Seedbed

Making a spring seeding on a prepared seedbed without a companion grain crop, broadcast or band seeded, and weeds controlled chemically, continues to be a popular and generally low risk

method of establishing alfalfa. In the Pennsylvania Alfalfa Growers Program, for example, top yields were generally from such seedings. And seeding year yields of up to 5 tons of hay per acre have been obtained. A firm seedbed and good soil to seed contact is a must. Your success with grasses seeded with alfalfa depends, of course, on your herbicide program for weed control.

No-Till Seedings Gaining Favor

Seeding alfalfa or other legumes the no-till way, either in small grain or corn stubble, or in sod, continues to gain in popularity.

A good time to have gotten ready for a spring no-till seeding in sod, according to Virginia workers, was last fall with control of existing vegetation using appropriate herbicides. But regardless, both Virginia and Pennsylvania workers agree there are several requirements for successful no-till establishment including:

- Competition from other plants must be eliminated or minimized.
- Heavy thatch and plant growth tall enough to shade the soil surface must be removed.
- Seedlings must be protected from insects, especially when seeding in sod. Furadan in the row can still be used.
- Soil fertility must be medium to high with pH above 6.5.

As regards the latter Virginia workers have found that for seedings made in sod, surface applications of lime on soils needing lime are beneficial. Ideally the lime should be applied 6 months or more before planting.

Fluid Seedings

Fluid or suspension seeding,

usually by a custom applicator or your fertilizer dealer, is another effective way to broadcast legume seeds uniformly over large acreages in a short time. Except for timothy, fluid seedings have not been satisfactory for most grasses.

Cultipacking before and after seeding, along with other good seedbed preparation to assure adequate soil/seed contact, is a must with this kind of seeding. Studies show that if seeding occurs immediately after the inoculated seeds are added to the suspension, there's no injury to the rhizobia. Likewise, recent studies indicate that with metalaxyl (Apron) treated seed, 1/3 or more of the Apron applied to alfalfa seed appears to be absorbed into the seed and is still available after being placed in the fertilizer

solution.

Speaking of the systemic fungicide metalaxyl (Apron), studies indicate this material provides good protection against present strains of Phythium and Phytophthora seed and root rot organisms with initial stands from treated seed lots frequently 20-40% better than untreated controls where these organisms are present. The use of Ridomil (1 pint/acre) at seeding, in addition to Apron treatment, provides additional protection, especially in fields known to have a problem with the above diseases.

One final word. Many new seedings have been damaged from herbicide residues, particularly triazines. Thus, plan your herbicide program for all crops in the rotation, not just the immediate planting.

Franklin Extension Board Reorganizes

CHAMBERSBURG (Franklin Co.) — Linda Bender, Chambersburg, was re-elected president of the board of directors of the Franklin County Cooperative Extension Association at the recent re-organizational meeting of the board. This will be Bender's second term as president. Other elected members of the executive committee include vice-president - Clifford Hawbaker, Chambersburg; secretary - Fran Horst, Orrstown;

and directors - Joe Middour, Waynesboro and Diana Meyers, Green-village. John Hart, chief clerk of the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, serves as treasurer.

Jeffrey Grove, Shippensburg, was re-elected to serve as delegate to the Capital Region Cooperative Extension Executive Board. Shirley Gividen, Waynesboro, was re-elected alternate delegate to the regional board.



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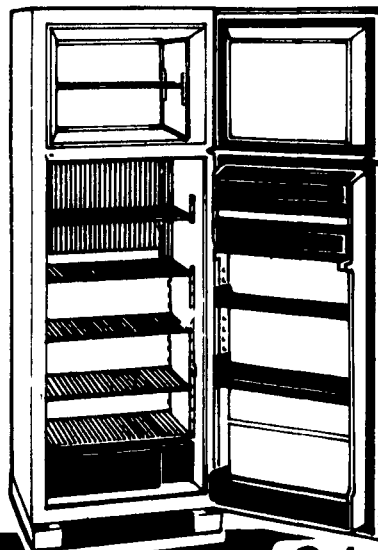
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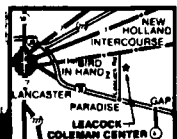
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