

Tips On How To Select An Alfalfa Variety

**Dr. Marvin Hall
Penn State**

Forage Extension Specialist

It is that time of year again when alfalfa seed is generally purchased for seeding next spring. However, the choice of which variety "is best" for a particular farm is not that easy!

In the past 10 years, more than 150 alfalfa varieties or experimental lines have been evaluated by Penn State University in research trials at three locations in Pennsylvania. A large number of varieties for which adequate data are available have performed satisfactorily in these research trials.

The results of these variety evaluation trials appear in the Forage Trials Report. The 1998 edition of this annual publication will be available at county offices of Penn State Cooperative Extension before Jan. 1.

With all of these varieties available, how can the "best" variety be selected? First of all, there is no "best" variety for all situations. In fact, there probably is not one "best" variety for a single Pennsylvania farm because of the extreme variability in soils across the state.

The key to selecting varieties is to identify the two or three varieties that are best suited for a particular situation. The following steps may help identify those suitable varieties.

1. Select varieties that have adequate resistance to the diseases prevalent in your area, on your farm, on in the exact field where the alfalfa will be planted.

2. From these varieties, select those that have persisted well in environments or situations similar to the farm where they will be planted. This information is given in the Penn State Forage Trails Report.

3. From the list of varieties that you have identified as acceptable, select

the highest yielding varieties. This can be done by selecting the highest yielding variety at one location over several years or by selecting the varieties that were among the highest yielding at all locations for several years. The first method will provide a small list of varieties that yield well under a narrower range of conditions, while the second method provides a limited list of varieties that yield well under a wider range of conditions.

4. From the list, select 2 or 3 varieties to plant and "test" in the field.

The varieties selected in this manner, when properly fertilized and managed, will be the highest yielding available and normally persist for three or more years. By planting a couple varieties, you are testing the "best" varieties to see which is truly best on your farm or in a particular field. This information should help when selecting an alfalfa variety in the future. *Avoid use of nonadapted common seedlots when growing alfalfa as*

a perennial forage crop in Pennsylvania.

A limited number of alfalfa varieties have the potential of producing secondary roots and have a spreading growth habit. These varieties are referred to as "creeping" alfalfas. However, in a humid climate such as Pennsylvania, these varieties have shown growth habits similar to our more typical bunch-type alfalfas and

have shown no yield advantage. Multileaf varieties, those varieties developed to have more than three leaflets per leaf, have recently been marketed throughout Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, these varieties have not consistently shown improved quality or yield over traditional varieties. Once again, select varieties based on disease resistance, winter hardiness, and yield, not because they are multileafs.



With new grain storage now you're investing in your future

With BROCK BINS, the quality of that future is for certain. That's because BROCK offers the best quality grain bins on the market today — with more features that mean not only more convenience but also longer life. Here are a few of the BROCK features that make us your No. 1 bin buy:

BROCK offers quality holding bins in diameters 6 thru 21-ft — to meet any need you have

Choice of conventional or rust proof black poly coated bin assembly bolts. Both are highest grade to protect your investment

Choice of 45 or 60-degree sloped hopper bottoms

BROCK's unique walk-thru door has no tie bars & needs no tools to open door "boards". Makes life easier

High rise (3" high) roof ribs provide tight fit & added roof strength

Adjustable stiffener ring increases roof strength & eliminates sag

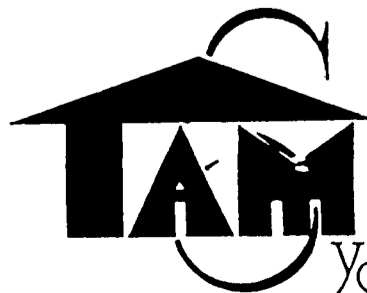
Strong 25-lb per sq ft uniform load rating makes our roof the one most producers prefer

High-strength drying floor, floor supports, and fan transitions let you keep grain in top condition for top price



For more information and prices about the world's No. 1 quality bins — your No. 1 grain marketing tool — see your BROCK dealer or contact us.

BROCK



PHONE
717-432-9738
FAX NO.
717-432-8389

systems Inc.

1248 SOUTH MOUNTAIN RD., DILLSBURG, PA 17019

Irish Scientist to Speak

(Continued from Page 1)

4-5

Mayne's grazing research with dairy cattle and beef is some of the strongest in the world. Sinclair Mayne's research has emphasized improving grazing management to increase intake and utilization of pasture. In addition, he has been involved in a long-term study to evaluate the optimum genetic merit of different cow breeds for grazing management systems.

Sinclair has been an invited speaker at many producer and scientific meetings throughout the world. He most recently was an invited speaker at the International Grassland Congress in Canada. His many travels and his experiences in grazing provides him with a broad understanding of grazing systems.

In addition to the educational program, there will be a trade show and company representatives available to showcase the latest in grazing technology. If it is New Zealand-style milking facilities, fence insulators, or the newest plant species for pasture that you are interested in, you can learn all about it at the trade show.

For more information, contact the Grazing Research and Education Center at (814) 863-2543.