

◆ INDUSTRY CORNER ◆

**EVALUATING AND MANAGING ESTABLISHED ALFALFA STANDS**

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There are numerous ways to evaluate alfalfa stands. One system that's precise is counting the number of plants or stems for a given area.

Visual evaluations are the most widely used by professionals and farmers alike. In this publication,

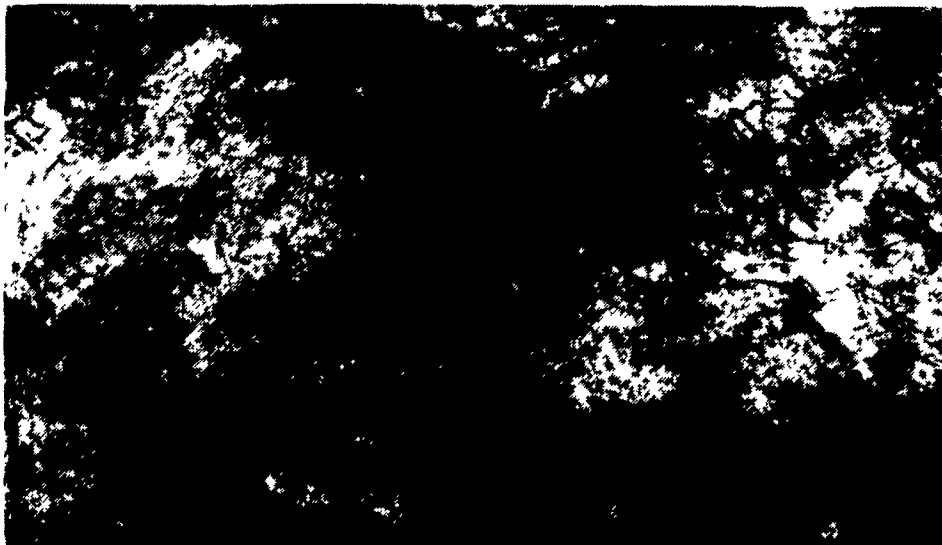
we are presenting a new and more accurate method that is easy to follow, practical, and very reliable.

First, walk the field about 7-14 days after grazing or hay harvest. Make 20 or more random readings using the pictures as a guide, recording the number associated with each picture for each reading. The pictures visualize the alfalfa only; grass and/or weeds will fill in the bare soil. These must be taken into account in your readings. When you

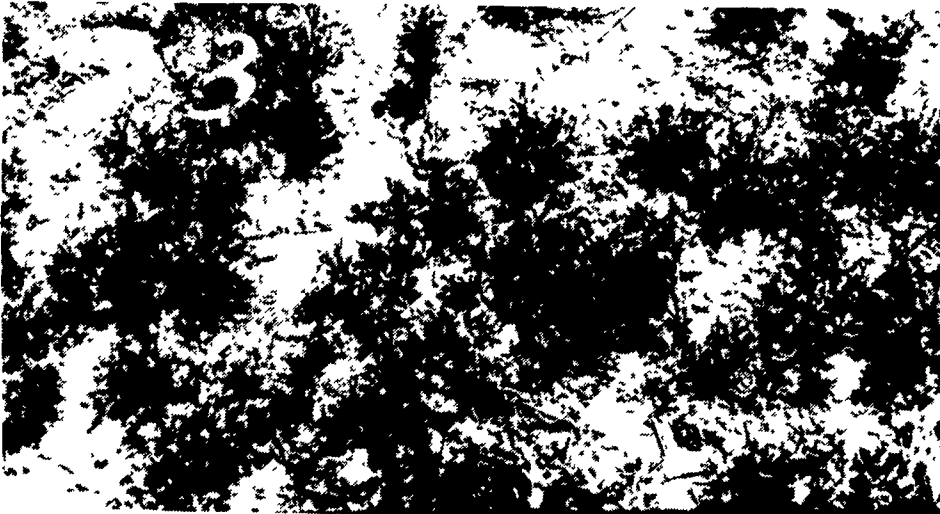
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**Reading = 2** Stands of 20 percent to 40 percent. These stands will usually yield less than half their potential as hay unless there is a good stand of grass in the mix. Without grass in the mix, weeds can become a real problem. This cover is also subject to crop rotation if the land is suitable.



**Reading = 1** Less than 20 percent stand. If the land is suitable for row crops, this would be a great time to move along with the crop rotation. If the land is subject to severe water erosion or you want to keep it in forage production for another year or so, overdrill with cool season grass or red clover.



**Reading = 3** When stands hit 40 percent to 60 percent. These stands offer a lot more options. Yields in the 60 percent range would be expected. This stand is ideal for overdrilling orchardgrass, for example, at the 4-6 pound rate in the fall or early spring. If you are going to keep this field in alfalfa for a couple more years, why not add red-clover in the spring as well? Both grass and clover beat weeds!

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