

❖ PASTURE PONDERINGS ❖

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ing an all-grass or forage-based system of dairy production can lower labor inputs and feed costs while allowing the farmer to concentrate on getting the most out of his cows.

Today we can also lower our feed costs and help our shrinking bottom line through the adoption of a forage-based dairy system in which we use rotational grazing as the major component in feeding our herd during the growing season. We can purchase feed supplements as needed to provide the energy and other nutrients necessary to maximize production in a forage-based system.

Rotational grazing is not a new idea or concept but one that we are revital-

izing and expanding. It is apparent that New Zealand and Europe were quicker to realize that rotational grazing was the way to keep their livestock industry economically viable. This resurrected article from Better Farming made me think about why U.S. farmers went away from all-grass farming. Our movement toward these types of systems today are not new and innovative but just a reintroduction and expansion of the old.

For information on rotational grazing systems or its many components, contact me at (717) 237-2221 or at NRCS, Suite 340, One Credit Union Place, Harrisburg, PA 17110-2993.

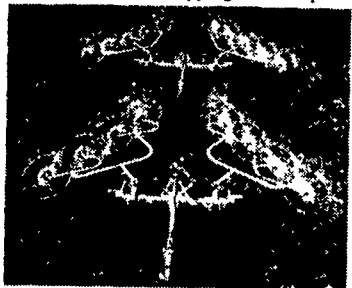
Until next time, *happy grazing!*



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Industry Corner

(Continued from Page 5)

root system because of toxins injected into the stems by the leafhopper. The result will be stunting, less regrowth, lower winter survival, and new seedlings can be killed. Yield losses may be as high as 40 percent in the seeding year and 15 percent for established stands.

Until recently, all alfalfa varieties have been highly susceptible to potato leafhopper and many farmers have been forced to apply several insecticide sprays per year. The cost for scouting and insecticide can easily be \$10 or more for each application per acre. This expense, in addition to lost quality, tonnage, reduced stands, and milk or meat production adds up rapidly. PLH is truly the number one pest of alfalfa.

In 1997, the first alfalfa varieties with true resistance to potato leafhopper were introduced by seed companies under several tradenames. Regardless of the tradename, all leafhopper resistant varieties received the resistance trait from a "wild" type of alfalfa. Resistant varieties have small hairs on stems and leaves which produce a substance that discourages leafhopper feeding and reproduction. Truly leafhopper resistant varieties should not be confused with those which are advertised as being "tolerant to yellowing." Varieties which are tolerant to yellow-

ing might simply use dark green color to hide the yellowing. Damage from the leafhopper may not be apparent but it occurs nonetheless.

What have we learned about PLH-resistant varieties? What more do we need to know? Are PLH-resistant varieties right for your farm?

These are some good questions. We have learned quite a lot in the year since first seedings were made but there are still many questions. New spring seedings in 1997 had to prove themselves under severe leafhopper pressure and drought. It was a rough test with mixed results.

We know that the PLH resistance trait is providing protection from leafhopper damage. Growers reported less yellowing and stunting when compared to normal varieties. University trials which were not sprayed have shown significantly higher yields for PLH resistant varieties when compared to normal varieties under leafhopper pressure.

We have learned that PLH resistance does not mean total immunity. Heavy leafhopper pressure such as occurred last year can be so great that even resistant varieties may need to be sprayed occasionally. As always, protection of new seedings should be a priority until establishment.

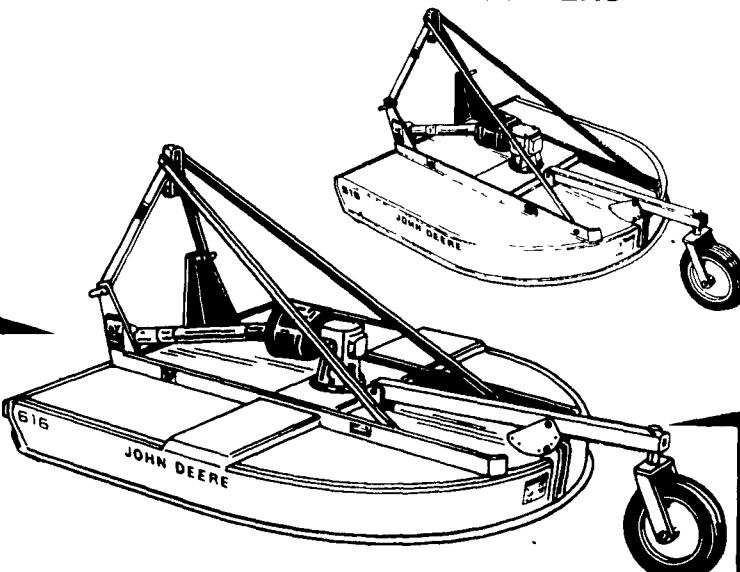
We also learned that not all PLH resistant varieties are "created equal."

Some varieties may have higher levels of resistance to PLH than others. University data and field reports seem to show resistance differences. In fact, some commercial varieties are advertised as "resistant" and others as "highly resistant."

In 1998, established stands should provide whole year data on PLH resistance, spray cost reduction, forage quality and yield. Eastern Universities are continuing to test PLH resistant varieties and more trials will be established.

With all these questions, should you plant PLH-resistant alfalfa? I believe that most information about PLH resistant alfalfa is very positive and that it will be beneficial on farms where PLH is a yearly pest. The resistance trait will also provide good insurance in areas where leafhopper damage occurs occasionally and where spraying is not done but damage occurs. In my opinion, the risks are low and the benefits are high with leafhopper resistant alfalfa, as long as the variety is otherwise well adapted to your farm.

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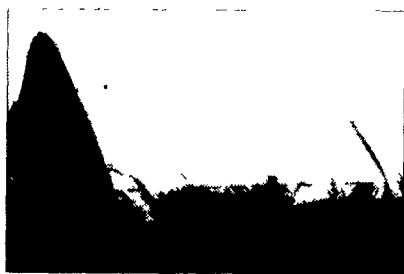
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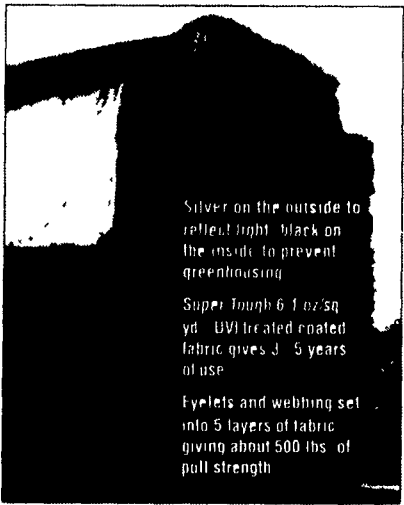


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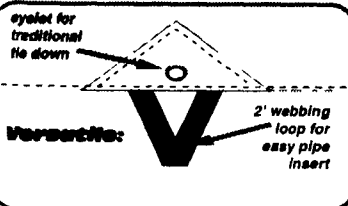
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