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Penns State Dairy
and Animal Science

FORAGE MANAGEMENT TIPS

This spring and summer, as you are making haylage and hay, keep in mind some basic management principles of good forage making.

First of all, proper maturity counts. In fact, it is likely the most important part of a good forage program.

Second, check dry matter. If it is

haylage, we know that there are specific moisture ranges that encourage good packing and fermentation. If we go too wet, which is less than 30 percent dry matter, or too dry, greater than 60 percent dry matter, we drastically increase the likelihood of a poor fermentation.

High quality silage requires a proper fermentation to promote good intakes and high levels of milk production. The only way to know the dry matter of haylage is to mea-

sure it.

Use a microwave, oven or koster tester - but you must measure the first load and check it periodically. If you are good at squeezing a handful to monitor moisture, then calibrate your handful with a few measured analyses in the microwave as very few people can retain their hand squeezing calibration over the winter or from cutting to cutting. Recalibrate yourself often.

A next point for haylage is to check particle size as you chop it. Nothing you do to haylage after harvest increases the particle size - everything reduces particle size post harvest. Silo filling, silo unloading, TMR mixers, and feed delivery systems all reduce particle size of forage.

Some systems are minimal in their effects and some are great. If moisture ranges are monitored for haylage, it is strongly suggested to try to achieve the shortest particle length possible that will fit with

your storage and feeding systems. For upright silos, you are more limited than with bunker silos in terms of acceptable length. Bunker silos still have to have proper moisture in order to pack longer material. Never compromise a good fermentation with too long a particle size. The problems of poor packing and moldy, poorly fermented haylage will far outweigh any increases that you may gain from longer haylage particle size.

If maturity and moisture of the crops are in the proper ranges, then getting your cow's physical effective fiber from grass or legume forages in the form of haycrop silage, balage, and hay will usually beat the physical fiber achieved from corn silage. There are often more problem with fermentation and fiber digestibility from long chopped corn silage supplying physically effective fiber for your cows, than if that long fiber comes from a haycrop source.

Here Are Guidelines To Alfalfa Replanting

GETTYSBURG (Adams Co.) — There have been several questions regarding replanting alfalfa stands. Because of last year's drought, some alfalfa stands that were established last spring did not grow well and are rather thin.

For new seedings, planting depth is .25-.5 inches deep and should be planted before April 30. Seedling rate is recommended at 12- to 15-pounds per acre. You may want to increase the rate on cool, damp soils to 18 pounds. If using a companion crop, such as oats, they should be seeded at 1.5 bushels per acre.

Here are four points to consider if you are thinking about no-tilling some alfalfa seed into established stands.

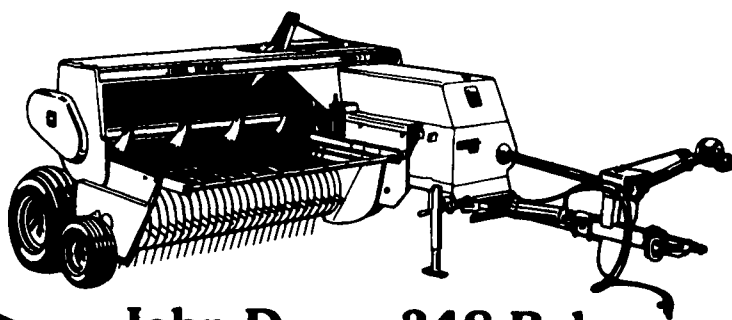
1. Established alfalfa produces a toxin that will reduce germination and slow seedling growth of new alfalfa plants. This is known as auto-toxicity.

2. Using a no-till drill to replant will cause damage to the established plants in the crown region, making them more susceptible to disease.

3. If the new seedlings germinate and emerge, they will be shaded out by the older, established plants. The older plants will treat the new seedlings as weeds.

4. Research has shown that replanting into an established stand is not economically beneficial.

So what should you do with a first-year stand that is thin? You may consider broadcasting some grass seed and allowing the stand to develop into a mixed or mostly grass stand. The other option would be to plant corn once the first cutting has been removed.



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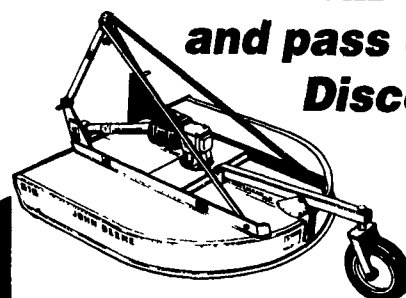
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