

Summertime Alfalfa Establishment

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This spring, a dairyman from Elizabethville commented on the fantastic development of an alfalfa stand planted last summer. By late April, this stand was outstanding! This producer is convinced, like many others, that midsummer is the best time to plant alfalfa. August seedings can provide an alternative for producers, if they pay attention to details.

Often called "fall seedings," the best time to sow is mid to late summer. New seedlings need a minimum of eight weeks of growth prior

to cold weather to ensure winter survival and to be ready to develop next spring. Crown and root development are critical during the establishment stage. Heaving losses increase greatly with later season attempts at establishment, but sowing too early can increase the risk of moisture stress. August 5 to 15 is ideal in southcentral Pennsylvania.

Providing necessary lime and fertilizer nutrients is important for stand productivity. There is still time to collect soil samples for a summer seeding. Turnaround time at testing labs is getting faster and faster. Lime is needed to ensure root and rhizobium health: phos-

phorous aids root growth and yield; and potassium is critical for plant vigor. At only \$6, soil analysis is a great investment.

Small seeded plants, like alfalfa, require special attention to seedbed preparation. A loose, fluffy soil results in poor seed to soil contact. Contact is necessary for the seed to absorb moisture to initiate germination. On tilled soils, firmness is improved by cultipacking before seeding. With attention to controlling existing vegetation, no-till forage seeding can be successful in summer.

Seeding depth is critical. Small seeds have limited energy reserves. Most successful stands are sown at 1/4

inch. If you cannot find some alfalfa seed on the soil surface, you are planting too deep. Properly adjusted press wheels are beneficial.

The goal of establishment is to have a minimum of 20 to 30 crowns/square foot for a one year stand. Typical alfalfa seed lots provide 200-225,000 seeds per pound. Sowing 15 pounds per acre drops approximately 90 seeds/square foot. Survival rates will vary from 10 to 50 percent, depending on environmental conditions. Drill calibration ensures correct seeding rates.

Often, weed pressure will not impact summer seedings. Perennials should be controlled with tillage or systemic herbicides. Summer annual weeds won't compete

and will be controlled by frosts. Winter annuals, such as chickweeds, mustards, etc. can be severe and may need to be controlled while small.

One increased risk of a summer seeding is a disease, sclerotinia. This disease in soybeans is called white mold. Under certain fall conditions, the disease will grow on the soil surface and release spores. These spores enter the alfalfa stem and infect plant crowns. Next spring, severely infected crowns may die. Lesions and black spore bodies can be seen. Rarely does the infection result in total stand loss. Many alfalfa varieties are evaluated for sclerotinia resistance.

Pay attention to detail and sound agronomics and your summer seeding will get off to a great start.

Alfalfa Intensive Training Seminar Scheduled In Pasco

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Alfalfa production and use technology is expanding at a rapid pace and there is much to be learned about alfalfa. The Alfalfa Intensive Training Seminar (AITS), developed by the Alfalfa Council, is unique within the agriculture industry and provides participants the knowledge needed to make educated and insightful recommendations to alfalfa producers.

The next semiannual AITS will take place in Pasco, Wash., Oct. 29-31 for the first time since the AITS program was founded 10 years ago. The seminar offers the expertise of nationally recognized and experienced alfalfa instructors.

The three-day conference will cover topics such as genetics, variety development, soils, fertility, forage quality, marketing, economics and a host of other alfalfa-related subjects. People who would benefit from learning more about alfalfa, including agronomists, district sales managers, product managers, dairy and beef nutritionists, farm editors, extension agents and custom harvesters, just to name a few, should plan to attend.

Certified crop advisers can earn up to 10.5 C.E.U. credits. Registration information, as well as a complete course curriculum, can be obtained by contacting the Alfalfa Council at (816) 584-8169, or visiting the Website at www.alfalfa.org. A brochure is available for downloading at the Website.

The Alfalfa Council is a non-profit organization, founded in 1953. During its history, the Council has developed a wealth of alfalfa materials and programs, including videos, slide sets, advertising, and printed materials all promoting "a better understanding and wider use of alfalfa" throughout the United States.



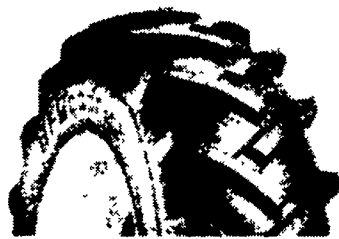
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