

## AFGC's Conference For Affiliate Leaders

Sponsored by the American Forage and Grassland Council and the Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council

November 5 - 7, 2002  
Carlisle, Pennsylvania

The 5th Conference for Affiliate Leaders will be held at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The program includes a special tour of nearby Gettysburg. The Gettysburg campaign (1863) lasted three days in which time 48,000 men were either killed, wounded or missing and was a turning point in the Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln made his famous Gettysburg Address there. Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg National Cemetery, and the farm of President Dwight D. Eisenhower are national historic shrines and popular tourist attractions.

### Cost

Your only cost to attend is transportation to Carlisle and a great package price of \$90/person double occupancy or \$100 single room occupancy (Package price includes 2 nights lodging and 5 meals).

### Who Can Attend

Anyone interested in learning more about AFGC and ways to energize affiliate councils. Participants do not have to be the official affiliate council contact for a given state.

### Main Program Goals

- To help affiliate councils catch a vision of what could be done at the local level through their own leadership
- To share effective program ideas among affiliates
- To give affiliates a chance to shape future AFGC programming and services in order to serve affiliates better
- To produce stronger forage councils at the local level
- To increase communication between affiliate councils and AFGC

For more information contact the AFGC office at 1-800-944-2342

## Applying Manure On Alfalfa

Scott Hendrickson  
UW Extension

Spreading manure on alfalfa ground boils down to three options: 1) apply manure on older alfalfa stands in the fall immediately before plowdown; 2) topdress manure on viable alfalfa stands during the growing season; and/or 3) apply manure before alfalfa establishment.

Applying manure on older alfalfa stands immediately before fall plowdown has a lot going for it. These are fields typically targeted for corn the following spring. Field "drive-ability" is usually pretty good in fall along with time and help to get the job done. Heads up though for the possibility of manure runoff. Plans for incorporation the day following spreading don't mean much if an evening gully washer sends runoff into critical water sources. Think also

about the nitrogen needs for that corn crop. When you factor in the nitrogen credits from manure along with those from the plowdown alfalfa crop, you may have more nitrogen than that corn crop needs. Nitrate leaching to groundwater isn't much of a problem on eastern red clays, but on sands and loamy sands this may be something to check out with local soil and water professionals.

Topdressing manure on viable alfalfa stands during the growing season is an option, but it certainly wouldn't be the best choice. No doubt that on fields testing low for phosphorus and potassium the fertility from the manure can add some yield potential. There are lots of drawbacks though. Among them: possible leaf burning from manure-carried salts and ammonia, crown damage from wheel traffic, and ero-

sion susceptibility.

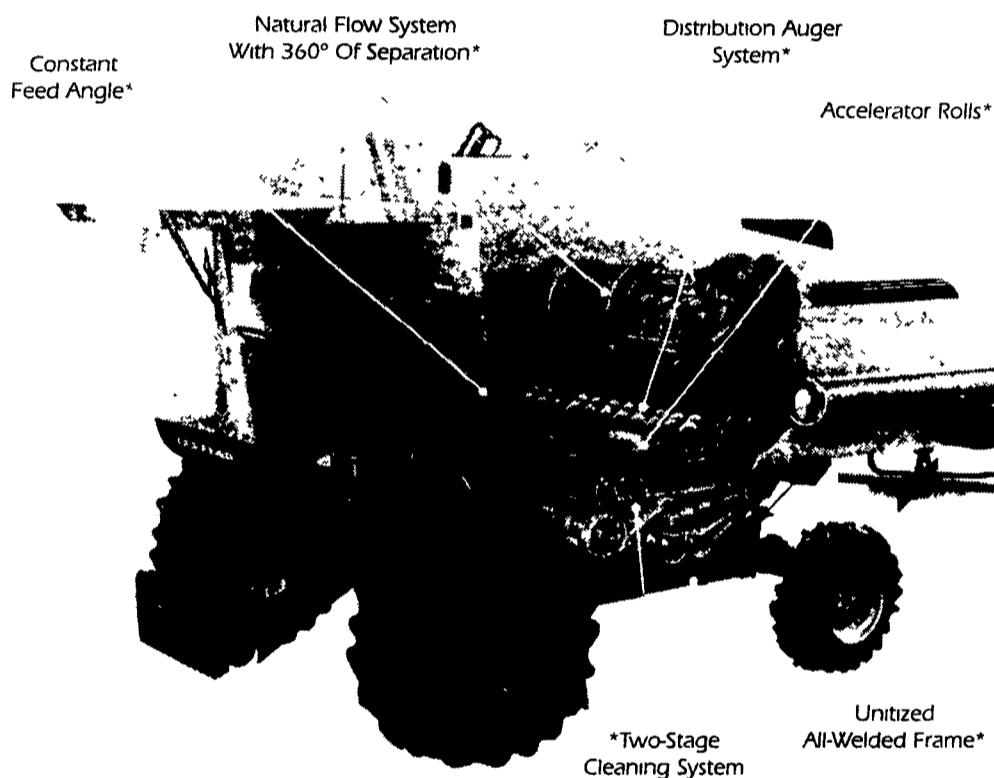
If this is the only option on the table, there are some criteria to keep in mind. Target older alfalfa vs. younger alfalfa stands. Damage to younger alfalfa stands is something you'll have to live with for several years. Older stands may soon be scheduled for rotation. Grassier stands may benefit from manure nitrogen and would be better choices than pure legumes. Limit manure to 3,000 to 5,000 gallons/acre or 10 tons/acre in a single application. Leaf burn potential is less if manure is applied right after harvest before regrowth starts. Also, pay attention to soil conditions (i.e. avoiding soggy fields offers less compaction and crown damage). Finally, limit those large spreader chunks that can cause smothering.

The final option that works well for many is applying manure before alfalfa establishment. Around here, these are typically fall applications after corn grain or silage harvest with alfalfa planned for the following spring. There are lots of advantages with this. Preplant manure applications can save commercial fertility dollars for phosphorus, potassium, boron and sulfur. Some interesting research from the University of Minnesota (Schmitt, 1992) found the preplant manure applications may enhance yield more than commercial fertilizer, possibly related to aeration and other organic matter benefits from the manure.

Several disadvantages, however, need to be managed. Mix manure well into the topsoil to minimize problems with poor seedbeds. Pay close attention to spring herbicide timing and on-time cutting schedules.

### New Publication

A new publication entitled Understanding Forage Quality is now available. This 20-page multi-colored publication was written by forage scientists from across the country and represents the most up-to-date, practical, easy to read information on forage quality. Complimentary copies are available from the Crop and Soil Sciences Dept. at Penn State by calling Lisa at (814) 865-2543 or e-mailing LAC8@psu.edu.



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