

# Practices To Help Pastures Damaged By Drought



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**I**n spring, several things can be done in the next month or so to improve pasture and hay production. Below are a few practices to focus on during the next few weeks.

**1. Take a soil sample to determine fertilizer and lime requirements.**

Go ahead and get a soil sample submitted over the next few weeks; you will get your results back in time to know exactly the amount of fertilizer and lime that need to be applied to your fields. Getting lime applied and proper nutrients available in pastures and hayfields is important when trying to establish clovers and make forage plants as competitive as possible. Getting your sample in now will help you beat the rush.

**2. Scout fields to determine the proper herbicide treatment for weedy fields.** Many pastures and hayfields will have heavier weed pressure than normal due to last year's drought, overgrazing and stand loss. Look over these fields to determine what type of weeds are present and how heavy the pressure is. Ask your Extension agent for help in identifying problem weeds and determining the proper herbicide and rate to apply. Most of the cool-season weeds growing can be controlled effectively with the herbicides that are currently available.

Remember that you will need about three days in which the high temperature reaches 60 F prior to spraying.

**3. Get ready to plant red and white clover.** Clover seeding time is over, but you can still plan for next year. Late February is the recommended time to broadcast clover seed over a tall fescue pasture or hayfield. Fields with more than 2 inches of stubble should be grazed down prior to seeding. Seed 2 pounds of white clover and 4 pounds of red clover per acre. Be sure to eliminate any nitrogen from your fertilizer if you are going to seed clover. The nitrogen will stimulate the grass to grow too fast, making it difficult for the clover seedlings to get light. Use nitrogen this fall in stockpiling fescue.

It will be important to consider any herbicide applications made prior to seeding clover. You need to wait four weeks after applying 2,4-D to plant clovers. Some of the newer herbicides have a significantly longer waiting period. Be sure to read the labels and talk to your Extension agent to determine the proper methods to seed clovers following herbicide applications.

These are just a few important recommendations that can dramatically affect the production, quality and profitability of your forage operations. Even though pastures are just beginning to grow, there are a lot of things to do to improve them.

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