

# Preparing For Fall Forage Planting

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**T**he timely rains provide a great opportunity to fall seed forages. The most successful time to seed forages in Northwest Missouri is the first two weeks of September. This is the ideal target. Before and after these dates, the seeding success is

reduced.

Typically, we want new forage seedlings have about 6 to 7 weeks of growth before the first killing frost. Late seeding often has the problem of winter survival.

Correcting the soil pH level and fertilizing with appropriate levels of phosphorus and potassium are best made before seeding. Soil test and select the appropriate recommendation for the type of forage being grown. Different forage types require different fertilizer recommendations for establishment.

Also, one should control any weeds present. One of our problem weeds in alfalfa is curly dock. We often have to move to a new field and start a new field when we have this weed problem. Winter annuals and other weeds should be controlled before seeding.

Fall seeding is best handled no-till. This has the advantage of maintaining soil moisture. If tillage is used, be sure that the new seed has good soil seed contact. Be sure to plant at the recommended seeding rates and at a depth of  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch.

Once a new planting is established, monitor the new seeding for insect damage especially around the field border. Grasshopper and other insect pests like new legume seedlings such as alfalfa and can kill the new forage plants.

If you have weeds competing with the forages, then herbicides may be used to control weeds. Also, clipping the new planting can be used to prevent shading of new forages from weeds. Adjust the mower height so as to cut above the forages while cutting the weeds.

Do not fall harvest or cut seedlings. Let the new seedlings get established so they can survive the winter and be prepared for rapid growth next spring. Next spring; manage the stand as you would your other established stands.

For more information, contact Wayne Flanary at 660-446-3724 or Heather Benedict at 660-425-6434, University of Missouri Regional Extension Agronomists.  $\Delta$

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