

Weekly Article

Steps for a Successful Forage Establishment

3-23-2021

Hello, my Name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural Resource Educator and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of Agriculture. Spring is officially here and hopefully here to stay. With the recent wet weather and this week's warm air and sunshine things are really taking off and beginning to grow. I have been able to get some field scouting done and while working on the farm, I take notice of a lot of different species breaking dormancy and growing. Speaking of breaking dormancy, many farmers are gearing up and getting ready to hit the fields. This week I want to discuss forage establishment and steps to get a solid stand this spring.

Spring is a popular time of year for forage growers to establish new stands of forage such as Alfalfa, orchard grass, fescue, perennial ryegrass and many more. Southern Ohio Seeding dates can range from the end of march to the first of May with mid-April the most ideal time. Spring seeding present many challenges though, probably #1 is the weather, field work for both no-till and conventional tillage systems should be done when the ground conditions are drier rather than wet. Another challenge is spring flush of weeds and other competitive species. Here are some tips to try this spring when establishing a new pasture or hayfield this spring.

1. Take a soil sample- Knowing your PH level and your phosphorus and Potassium levels will allow you to make corrections before any seed is placed in the soil. Most cool season forages like the soil PH to be around 6.0 to 6.5 and phosphorus levels should be 20 ppm to 30ppm, potassium levels should be between 120-150ppm. If your PH is extremely low 5.5 or less, it might be wise to apply lime in the spring and delay planting to late summer.
2. Purchase good quality seed. Cheaper is not always better when it comes to buying forage seed. Make sure to buy clean certified seed and always read the seed tag so you know germination rate. Remember if you want to plant 10 lbs./ac of orchard grass seed that has a germination rate of 85% $= 10\text{lb} \times 0.85 = 8.5\text{lbs}$ that germinates, this means you need to plant an additional 1.5 lbs. to get 10lbs of seed that will germinate or 11.5 lbs. total.
3. Take time to calibrate and do maintenance on the drill before heading to the field.
4. Prepare a good seedbed- Proper seed to soil contact is critical for a good healthy forage stand. If conventional tillage is conducted make sure to

have the soil level and firm. For no-till seeding make sure the field is clean of winter annual weeds and other emerging weeds with a good herbicide burndown.

5. Do not plant too deep. This is probably the #1 cause of establishment failures. Forage seed is very small with little energy reserves to break through hard soils. ¼ inch deep is deep enough for most grass and legume forage species. No-till drills should be set adequately for proper seeding depth.
6. Use a companion crop. Companion crops such as Oats will help protect young seedling from late frost and heavy rainfall events preventing erosion and soil crusting.

Some other details to go over:

- Youth planning to show livestock at the 2021 Adams county Jr Fair or Ohio State Fair Must complete Quality Assurance training. This year's training will be offered via Zoom upcoming training will be March 30th at 7p.m., April 13th at 7 P.M. April 28th, at 5 P.M. and May 12th at 5 P.M. to Register go to <https://go.osu.edu/21QA>
- USDA will continue taking applications for the Quality Loss Program to April 9th. This program assists producers who suffered crop quality losses due to qualifying 2018 and 2019 natural disasters, call (937) 544-2033 for information.
- CRP Grasslands signup will begin March 15th,2021 and conclude April 23rd,2021 contact the farm service agency for assistance in signing up for these programs.
- Next Farm Office webinar presented by OSU Extension Farm Office team April 7th 2021 7:00 – 8:30 PM, discussion will be on the economic outlook for Agriculture. This is a free Webinar event. Go to farmoffice.osu.edu to register for the event.

From the field

- Winter wheat, rye, and other small grains are greening up growth stage Feekes 2-4. (tillering stage of growth)
- Poison Hemlock rosettes have broken winter dormancy, time for an herbicide treatment.
- Multiflora rose has begun to bud and make small leaves, time for a basal herbicide application.
- Manure applications continue.
- Pastures are greening up, avoid overgrazing too soon.
- Spring calving in full swing some producers are finished.
- Producers beginning to top dress winter wheat, consider split applications.
- Potatoes are being planted (good Friday is a week away).