

Weekly Article

4-1-2023

Are you Considering a New Hay Seeding?

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. The Month of March is in the books (thank goodness) and I personally believe it was one of the windiest ones I have ever endured! As I make my travels across the county, I can't help but notice the scares of March all around. From broken or uprooted trees to damaged barns, and it seems like 2 out of 5 houses have tarpaulins on the roof covering detached roof shingles. As April begins hopes for calmer days and warmer conditions fill the thoughts and minds of farmers across the county. Looking at the extended forecast warm is definitely in the future but with the warmth comes rains and storms as well. Easter weekend is coming up and there is a small chance of rain. As a young lad, I always remember my parents and grandparents discussing if rain on Easter was good or bad. The old saying goes that rain on Easter equals seven Sundays of rain, is that good or bad? Sunday is the day of rest and rainy days do make it easier to rest! I was also taught that if it doesn't rain on Easter the hay crop will be poor, my school of thought is questionable just as any folklore or saying but one thing is for certain plants like water and rain makes grain! Speaking of plants, the grass is definitely growing and with expected temperatures to reach the mid-70's the spring flush is definitely upon us. If you have not made some time to walk your forage fields yet, don't delay.

Taking time to walk and evaluate forage stands during the spring can definitely help you make some critical decisions on whether to keep the stand, improve the stand, or kill the forage stand and start new. Spring seeding of cool-season forages such as fescue, orchard grass, clovers, and alfalfa is very popular but in today's agriculture economy, it is very expensive. My mouth about hit the floor when pricing some ladino white clover earlier this year with prices as high as \$310/bag and much of our grass forages are reaching \$150-\$200/ 50lb bag. Making sure to take time and evaluate first before cutting a check can save a lot of money. If your pasture or hay field is in need of overseeding or complete renovation, the window of planting opportunities is getting smaller each passing day. For many of our cool season forages May 1 is a good day to shoot for, the reason for this is the keyword (cool season), these forages love cool wet conditions, and as May approaches both air and soil temperatures are increasing in turn slowing growth and development of these species. Before pulling the trigger on new hay or pasture seeding this month, here are a few considerations.

- **Walk the pasture and look down-** Evaluating current stands can be tricky in the spring, many fields look good in the spring from a distance. It is important to look for weed species, percent of bare ground, and inventory of current forage species growing. I also like to take pictures to refer to later on. Pastures that have less than 50% desirable species should be considered candidates for complete renovations.
- **Choosing the right species for your operation-** After evaluations are complete take time to research forages that work well in your growing environment. This should be done on a Micro and Macro level. For hay producers' diversity in forages are not as critical as it would be for pasture production. 3-4 different species of forages should be considered for pasture renovations but making sure to match forages to your level of management is important. Is your operation a continuous grazing or managed grazing system? For continuous grazing operations, the name of the game is tough and hardy. Forages like endophyte-free or friendly fescue or ryegrass, work very well vs orchard grass and timothy. For my hay-producing friends make sure to pick forages that adapt well to your cutting schedule and soil types, there are many new types of alfalfas being developed to handle heavy clay soils, but they do not like to be cut every 21-30 days.
- **Test the soil fertility-** If you are going to take time to walk your pasture why not take a soil test? For both pastures and hay fields testing soils at depths of 4-5 inches in 15-20 spots per 25 acres is recommended. Soil PH levels should be maintained between 6.5-7.0 ph. for best production. Calcium levels and Magnesium levels should be maintained in an adequate supply for pasture production to avoid early-season grazing health issues such as milk fever and grass tetany.

Other information:

- Crop Revenue Loss Assistance through the second phase of the Emergency Relief Program (ERP), the deadline is June 2nd. To learn more, call your Local Farm Service Agency.
- April 10th, 2023, Adams County Farm Bureau Public policy meeting, 8:00 am at Frisch's Restaurant back meeting room, 11157 State Route 41, West Union Ohio 45693

Ag Educator Words of encouragement – “You can't starve profit”. Yours truly