



Spring Seeding Reminders

Jim Morrison
Extension Educator
Crop Systems

Spring forage and hay crop seeding is just around the corner in northern Illinois so it is a good time to review a few key items that play an important part in perennial forage establishment.

- Be sure to have reviewed the results of a soil test (hopefully taken last fall) and have applied, if needed, the appropriate rate of limestone, phosphorus and potassium.
- Were there herbicides applied to last year's crop that could "carryover" and damage new forage seedlings? Check the herbicide label for crop rotation restrictions.
- Consult the seed bag tag and adjust seeding rate for germination and purity, seeding rates can be expressed as pounds of pure live seed per acre, or as seeds per acre.
- Be sure legume seed is inoculated with the proper inoculant and the expiration date has not expired.
- The optimal time for spring seeding is typically as soon as the seedbed can be prepared and should be completed by early May.
- A firm seedbed is critical. In a tilled seedbed, if a footprint is left deeper than ½-inch, the soil is not firm enough. Drills with press wheels and cultipacker type seeders, like the Brillion, are good choices when seeding into a tilled seedbed.
- Generally, the recommended seeding depth is ¼- to ½-inch. On sandy soil, seed can be placed ¾-inch deep.
- There are pros and cons of seeding a companion crop. The advantages are reduced soil erosion and weed pressure, and increased forage yield. However, forage quality will be reduced and it is important to remove the companion crop before it competes with the perennial forage seedlings. If using oats, seed 1- to 1 ½-bushels per acre and use an early-maturing, short variety. An option to oats is seeding up to 4 pounds of annual ryegrass per acre.
- When direct seeding (solo seeding) pure stands of alfalfa, there are various herbicides that can be used pre-plant and post-emergence.

Additional information is found in the Illinois Agronomy Handbook, available at Extension offices, and on-line at www.aces.uiuc.edu/iah

##

Jim Morrison, (815) 397-7714, morrison@uiuc.edu
Date: April 3, 2006