

Start Planning Now for Alfalfa Planting

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As we head into August it's time to remember that if you want to get some new alfalfa established, August is the time to do that. In general we want alfalfa planted between mid August and mid September, but the best new seedings I've seen over the year have been planted the last two weeks of August. Good stand establishment starts with a soil test. The biggest issue for new seedings seems to always be soil pH and/or low phosphorus levels. I've lost track of the number of times I have looked at new alfalfa seedings that weren't doing well and a soil test indicated a pH level below 6. Alfalfa is a legume and needs a pH of 6.5 or above. Once that alfalfa is planted, it's awfully hard to adjust that soil pH, so let's take care of it before we plant. The slickest way that I've seen to seed new alfalfa is to no-till it into wheat stubble. If no lime needs to be added you can plant right into the standing stubble, or, this is about the only time I'll say this, if you don't have a good no till drill, burn off the stubble just before planting and then drill into the smoldering remains. If you are planting roundup ready alfalfa, then follow the seed guidelines for how soon to treat. A small percentage of that seed simply isn't glyphosate tolerant and you want to get those seedlings out of there soon. If you aren't using roundup ready seed you may want to give serious consideration to using a preplant herbicide. Many of these need to be incorporated so leave yourself enough time to lime, fertilize and incorporate. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Time to evaluate weed control problems

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As a kid growing up on an irrigated crop farm in Nebraska, early August was irrigation time. And in those days, before center pivots, it meant walking rows with either siphon tubes in an open ditch or gated pipe...yes, I really am that old! But most of the irrigation if you have any, around here is center pivot which means you probably have a little bit of time in early August, in between finishing up native hay and controlling volunteer wheat, to evaluate weed control in crop fields. Some producers expect a weedless field and others expect that there'll always be a bunch of weeds out there. You need to shoot for something in between there. August is when most weeds are going to be busy blooming and it may be when they are most visible, which gives us a good opportunity to evaluate weed control. Specifically, I want to know what ISN'T being controlled. If it's a weed here or a weed there, I'm not going to get too concerned, escapes happen. But if it's a whole patch of the same weed then we have a potential herbicide resistance issue, and that's becoming more and more common. Take notes on where it is in the field - even take a photo because most of those cell phones you all have do have cameras in them. If you aren't sure what the weed is, bring it in to me for ID. Let's also take note of what herbicides were used and when. It's important to track these issues down now, not so much for this year, but so we can make a plan for next year. If you are depending on glyphosate only still, it's time to recognize that we need to start adding a soil residual herbicide. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Pasture Evaluation, half way thru the season

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Assuming that you have cattle in pastures from early May thru late October, then the first of August is the half way point through the season. Which means it is time to do an evaluation of pasture condition. When I do a pasture evaluation in early August, I want to look at several things. How much forage is still out there? I want to see a good balance between grasses and forbs. If grasses are few and far between, then there is a problem and we need to be getting cattle out of the pasture. If there's nothing left in the pasture over 1 inch tall then we REALLY have a problem and you need to empty the pasture right now (and I have seen that in early August!) I also want to look at the grazing distribution within the pasture. If all of the grazing continues to be in just one or two locations and the rest of the pasture is virtually untouched, we need to figure out why and how can we get the cattle to other parts of the pasture. That may be something as easy as moving a salt block or a lick tub, or it may involve throwing in a hot wire and adding a water tank. This is also a good time to be evaluating the cattle, especially for fly control purposes. With the heavy rains in June I'm betting that fly problems have really picked up in the past couple of weeks and fly control in some form or another can be easily justified. Under average stocking rates I honestly expect pastures to be looking pretty good up to now. If you are seeing some issues, then we need to start discussing stocking rates, grazing pressure and start making corrective actions while there's still time in this pasture season! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.