

Planning for Alfalfa Planting

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Probably the best time to plant a new stand of alfalfa is the last half of August into the first week of September. But if you want to have a successful stand establishment you need to start planning now, and then of course have a little help from Mother Nature with some timely showers. First make sure that the field you want to plant into has not had residual herbicides that may carry over and cause issues. Of course you also need to soil test - listen to tomorrow's program for more on that. If you are planting into wheat stubble and you don't need to incorporate lime, you can likely no-till into that stubble either before or after burning it off. Make sure you use good quality named variety seed that has been pre-inoculated or add inoculant in the drill box. Plan on 12 to 15 pounds of seed per acre to insure a good stand! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Importance of Soil Testing for New Alfalfa

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. The most often missed step in establishing a good stand of alfalfa is soil testing before you put even one seed in the ground. Far too often I am called out to look at a new stand of alfalfa that is basically just sitting there. It wasn't soil tested before planting and when I pull a soil test it comes back with an acidic pH usually below 6. It is nearly impossible to raise soil pH in an established stand of alfalfa. The ag lime needs to be applied to the field and worked in with a disc or field cultivator BEFORE you plant. The second issue that I see is low soil phosphorus levels, which can be exacerbated by low soil pH. We need to have at least 25 ppm at planting time, and I might still suggest applying some starter fertilizer, either 18-46-0 or 11-52-0. That nitrogen kick is helpful until the inoculant kicks in and the phosphorus can't hurt! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Taking a Soil Test

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. The hardest part about taking a soil test is raising your energy level to get out in the field to do it. Your ATV or utility vehicle can make it go even easier but we still need to have more soil tests taken. In most fields you can make a big Z pattern or an X and stop at 10 to 15 spots to pull a sample. For pH, phosphorus and potassium all you need is soil from the top 4 to 6 inches. If you're serious about nitrogen and some of the other mobile elements, you need an 18 to 24 inch profile sample. Put all the samples from a field into a bucket, keeping profile samples separate from surface samples, mix them all up and then pull out about one pint of soil. Bring it to the office and we'll take it from there. With the price of fertilizer still high, this can save you a bunch of money. We have sample bags at the office if you need them. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Grass Control in Alfalfa

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. This is the time of year that the annual bromes, like downy brome, are done growing in your alfalfa fields and you can see how much foxtail and crabgrass you have. Even if you don't have Roundup Ready alfalfa you have plenty of options to control these grassy weeds. Immediately after swathing and baling you can treat with gramoxone. You can also treat with Post, Post Plus or one of the many clethodim products like Select or Arrow. These are all grass only products. Pursuit and Raptor can be used and have varying control on grasses and broadleaf weeds. I've heard producers and applicators give a range of answers when it comes down to control - it's going to be best when weeds are smaller though. If you have an older alfalfa stand that you may be tearing up, watch the recropping intervals on Pursuit and Raptor. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Test Those Forages

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I've seen a lot of forage tests come across my desk over the years and the one thing that I can guarantee you is that there is no way to look at a forage and tell for sure what the quality of that forage is and each year and each field or hay meadow is going to be different. When you are busy baling a cutting you don't want to think about stopping and testing forages then. But keep each cutting, each field, even each year separated so you go back when it slows down a little bit and sample those. I see a lot of producers concerned about nitrate on forage sorghum and sudan but not very concerned about all the other factors. Nitrates are probably going to be low this year, but protein and digestibility will once again just be all over the board. So it may not be now, sometime before you start feeding, get those forages tested. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.