

MESSENGER-INQUIRER

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Farm Update

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES
EDUCATION

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February 17, 2024

Success with Frost Seeding Clover

Thousands of acres of Kentucky pasture and hay fields are seeded with clover each year, much of it onto a frozen soil surface in late winter. Unfortunately, this is one of the practices in farming that usually results in disappointment. It can be done better, increasing the chances of productive forage. Here are a few tips to ensure you have the best chance of getting clover established from a frost-seeding.

Address soil fertility needs. Get a current soil test and apply the needed nutrients. Clovers need soil that is pH 6.5 to 7 and medium or better in P and K. Do not apply additional N except for that supplied from diammonium phosphate (DAP) if used to supply the needed P. But get the soil tested; anything else is just a guess.

Select a good variety. Choose an improved variety with known performance and genetics. Choosing a better red clover variety can mean as much as three tons of additional hay and a longer stand life. Spread plenty of seed. UK recommends 6 to 8 pounds of red and 1 to 2 pounds of white/ladino clover per acre. Apply higher rates if using only one clover type. Applying the minimum (6 lb. red and 1 lb. white) will put over 50 seeds per square foot on the field (37 red, 18 white).

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Make sure the seed lands on bare soil. Excess grass or thatch must be grazed and/or drug with a chain harrow until there is bare ground showing before overseeding. The biggest cause of seeding failure with frost seedings is too much ground cover. Heavy cattle grazing or dragging with a chain harrow can accomplish this.

Get good seed-soil contact. With frost seeding, we depend on the rain and snow or freeze-thaw action of the soil surface to work the clover seed into the top ¼ inch of soil. A return pass with the chain harrow after seeding can get seed down to the soil surface to better ensure good soil contact.

Control competition. Do not apply additional N on overseeded fields this spring and be prepared to do some timely mowing if grass or spring weeds get up above the clover. Clover is an aggressive seedling but will establish faster and thicker if grass and weed competition is controlled.

Consider purchasing a GPS guidance aid. One of the most common issues with applications from a spinner or sprayer are skips and overlap. Each cost money. Research at the Princeton Research Center found that overlapped and skipped areas of plot were reduced 40% when utilizing a very simple GPS guidance assist mounted to a 4-wheeler seeding clover on pasture. Consider the cost of wasted seed and fertilizer compared to the cost of a GPS guidance aid. The unit could easily return on investment in a short period of time based on the results of that study.

Clover can be reliably established into existing grass pastures with some attention to detail. Soil fertility, variety, seeding rate, seed placement, and competition control are the major keys to success.

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Beef Cattle Production Meeting Thursday

There will be a beef cattle production meeting next Thursday, February 22 at 6:00 p.m. in Bittel Hall at the Daviess County Lions Club Fairgrounds in Philpot. In addition, the Daviess County Cattleman's Association will conduct its spring meeting and hold an auction to sell one of the association's mobile squeeze chutes which was recently replaced with a new unit. A beef quality and care assurance certification training will be at 4:30 for those who need to renew their certification.

Last year, a state-wide research project was conducted to determine if internal parasites are building resistance to popular endectocides used in Kentucky beef cattle herds. Two site locations in Daviess County were included in this project. Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler, Extension Beef Cattle Nutrition specialist will be at the meeting to share the results of this research activity and discuss ways to reduce the risk of internal parasites in your herd from developing resistance to endectocides.

Soybean Success School – Monday

Space is available for the Soybean Success School happening on Monday at the Extension office.

Call or text me at (270) 993-6670 to register.

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