THE March 2002

FORAGER

Agronomics with livestock in mind!

IN THE FIELD

A mild winter and sunny days have a number of producers chomping at the bit. In southern Pennsylvania some fieldwork has begun, and liquid manure is being spread in a number of areas. With these abnormal conditions there are a few things to keep in mind.

Nitrogen availability from manure – Manure applications that are not incorporated immediately have much lower nitrogen availability than applications incorporated the same day. Typically ½ of the N applied in cow manure is available when incorporated the same day, while only 20% may be available if not incorporated within 7 days. This may be a benefit depending on a farm's nutrient management plan.

Avoid seeding too early – Spring has not yet broken. Remember just a few hours of 26ºF or colder temperatures can kill an alfalfa seedling, prior to contractile growth (formation of the crown-starts 1 week after emergence and can take as long as 16 weeks). Minimum soil temperature for alfalfa seedlings is 36ºF - generally occurs mid-March through April in different areas of the northeast.

CONSIDERATIONS WITH SEED MIXES

Seeding mixes including grasses and legumes reap a number of agronomic and feeding benefits; however putting mixes through a drill can be a problem. Grasses with larger "fluffy" seed sizes that can be a problem include broomegrass, ryegrasses, festulolium, tall fescue, and orchardgrass. Typically the following rules apply to most seeding applications.

Bromegrass – must be sown through the grain box on a drill, or mixed with a small amount of superphosphate and sown through the fertilizer box.

Ryegrasses, Festulolium, Tall Fescue, and Orchardgrass – all these grasses will typically go through the seeding box of the drill if they do not makeup any more than 50% of the mix. If they make up more than 50% of the mix "bridging" may be a problem depending on the drill and seeding rate. Under these conditions, consider the options listed for bromegrass.

Another instance where problems may arise is with mixes that require a high seeding rate (such as 30 or 40 lbs/acre). The openings in the small seeds box may not be large enough to allow the rate of passage required for these seeding rates; the grain box may provide an alternative for seeding at these rates.

If using grain or fertilizer boxes to seed these monitor your seeding depth. Most grasses and alfalfa should only be planted ¼ inch deep. Burying seed is the number one cause of seeding failures. The disc openers for small grains or fertilizer are often set at a depth of 1 inch or deeper, much too deep to start a new seeding.

NUTRI+PLUS BMR SORGHUM-SUDANGRASS FILLS THE VOID

Many livestock operations are finding an increasing number of voids within their rotations due to nutrient management constraints and yield requirements to produce needed forage tonnage. BMR Sorghum-sudangrass can fit well in many rotations and feeding programs. It offers high yields (10 to 14 tons/acre @ 65% moisture) excellent drought tolerance, and BMR hybrids, Nutri-Plus, offer excellent digestibility (78.7% IVTD, compared to 68.1% IVTD for non BMR hybrids in Cornell's 1999 Research Trial).

As an annual that can be harvested for forage or grazed it is extremely versatile. However, sorghum-sudangrass does require some specific management practices to prevent nitrate or prussic acid poisoning. See the product literature for more information.

A field of Nutri+Plus in mid summer of 2001.

CURRENT HAPPENINGS

While some hybrids have sold out, a number of them are still available in good supply. It is important to check with producers again to find out if their needs have changed or have been underestimated. You can gain sales and prevent the competition from coming in by doing this. Get orders in as soon as possible so they can be shipped to you in time.

Some seed has been shipped already; by Mycogen and Renaissance. The bulk of seed will be shipped in the next few weeks. Have space designated for your shipments so you are ready when they arrive.

Delivery forms are generated for each order you submit which must be filled out when seed is delivered. If you receive delivery of your Mycogen seed, please contact me so that we can send you a packet of delivery forms.

WOLF RIVER HYBRIDS SHOW THEIR STUFF

Proven performance showed up again in the 2001 Renaissance Forage Variety Trials. Wolf River hybrids were consistently at the top of the pack for digestibility and yield in test plots containing Mycogen, Agway, Pioneer, and other brands. Of five plots in four states a Wolf River hybrid was the top yielder in each plot, and in two of the plots a Wolf River hybrid had the most whole plant digestibility and highest milk yield per ton. Wolf River hybrids like 2096L and 2114L have consistently been in the top third of plots over different years. Consistent performance has enabled producers to take advantage of these hybrids to improve milk production.

OPPORTUNITIES

Winter is coming to a close, but sales opportunities are not. We are in the prime season for small seeds, alfalfa and grasses with the superior WL alfalfas and the AgriCulver grass coupled with the Renaissance Nutritional Advantage you have the premium arsenal in the industry. Take steps to ensure you have quality forages to work with now and get some sales.

Tales from the farm

Spring is certainly an interesting time on virtually all farms. I always looked ahead to getting into the field when I was at home on my family's farm. I love spring, although thinking back on some of the reoccurring headaches I am not sure why. It seems there are some reoccurring rules farmers live by every spring.

Rule #1 – Cows will always find the weak spot in the fence *– no matter how many weeks you spend fixing fence, cows always find the weak spot where a tree fell on the fence, or the gate was left open because, "I'll be back through it in a minute, they won't get out.." Conditions like this usually result in one of the first parts of "spring training" as you run a minimum of 10 miles to round them up and attempt to get them back through the gate or opening they just came through.*

Rule #2 – The "Got-a-Go's" don't save you any time *– every time a quick, temporary fix is made because you "Got-a get going," (as you watch your neighbor tilling ground like Richard Petty racing at Daytona) the quick fix doesn't hold, resulting in a minimum of $1000 repair bill for damage to other parts or equipment and a sick feeling in the bottom of your stomach.*

Rule #3 – That wet hole is deeper than it looks *– inevitably the wet spot in that one field looks dry this year, "I bet I can plow right through it." Two minutes later only the top three inches of the rear tires can be seen out of the mud. Here the second part of "spring training" begins as you walk the 10 miles back to the barn, or to the neighbor's to get someone to come pull you out. Usually by the time the operator gets close enough to someone to yell, the following dialog ensues, operator to his son, "Get that other #@*% tractor, and a chain and get down here." The son usually responds, "Did you get stuck?" To which his father says, "Get that damn thing now, I ain't got all day." If the son gets stuck, his father usually says something like, "Where is your head, you know that spot is always wet, how are we going to get that thing out?" Two hours later, with a line of tractors from the surrounding neighbors hooked in a line a ¼ mile long, the stuck tractor comes inching out. To which the operator offers a round of thank you, and a "…I can't believe that hole was that deep." A neighbor usually replies, "You know the same thing happened to me just yesterday."*