

CORNER POST

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The Value of Frost Seeding Legumes

Have You Considered Introducing Legumes Into Your Grass Pasture?

A 25-30% legume component in the pasture offers several benefits. This will improve quality for grazing animals while also increasing the amount of forage that can be removed (50-100% increase in production when using legumes as a small percent of the grass pasture).

Introducing legumes into grass pasture also reduces the amount of applied nitrogen fertilizer since the legume will fix nitrogen and help provide a large portion of the nitrogen the grass needs to grow.

Tips For Success When Frost Seeding:

Starting in January and running through March to early April across the Midwest, frost seeding legumes into pastures and hay fields makes a ton of sense (and cents). This method doesn't disturb existing sod and typically, access to frost seeded areas for grazing livestock is much faster than with conventionally tilled fields. It's also an economical method to introduce legumes with reduced labor and equipment cost.

Tips include:

- Make sure frost seeding is done before frost leaves the soil structure. The basic principle is that alternate freezing/thawing action of soil in late winter/early spring,

along with spring rains, incorporates the spread legume seed. Typically, 2-3 cycles of freezing/thawing are desired for best incorporation.

- To prepare for seeding, ideally the pasture would be grazed or clipped closely the previous fall to reduce the amount of thatch present
- Soil tests should indicate proper phosphorus and pH levels for legumes
- Following seeding, the area can be grazed as the tramping action helps incorporate the seed and reduces competition from grass to the new legume seedlings. However, care must be taken not to overgraze until the legumes have established.

What Species Should I Consider?

Most adapted forage legume species are suitable for frost seeding. Red clover is most commonly used due to excellent seedling vigor, but white clovers, birdsfoot trefoil and alfalfa can also work. Alfalfa should not be used if the existing pasture contains alfalfa due to auto-toxicity.

- The overall frequency of frost seeding depends on how well the level of legumes is maintained in the stand, but a rule of thumb is to plan on over-seeding one third of your pasture acres every year.

Ready to Get Started?

Adding a legume to your existing pasture is an economical way to add value to the pasture, resulting in higher forage quality, yields and improved animal health. If you're ready to get started, contact us at info@laxseed.com or **800.356. SEED** and we'll get you connected with a Forage First dealer in your area.



Forage First Spotlight:

Forage First 9615 3-Year Red Clover is a new elite medium red clover variety. This variety has been tested throughout the Midwest and has shown superior forage yield potential, good quality, excellent stand persistence and good disease resistance. FF 9615 is adapted to a wide geography and works well in both grazing and hay environments.

About The Corner Post

The Corner Post is a periodic email series with timely forage tips from the agronomic experts at Forage First and La Crosse Seed. If you have a question you'd like us to answer, contact us: info@laxseed.com or 800.356.7333