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## FALL PREPARATION TO SODSEED PASTURES AND HAY MEADOWS

Yes – nitrogen fertilizer prices have come down. But they still are so high it's going to be difficult to justify fertilizing pastures next spring. So instead, let's grow our own N using legumes.

Do you have a pasture or hay meadow that is relatively free of weeds and makes up no more than about 15 percent of your total pasture acres? If so, here is what I want you to do. From now until that grass will grow no more this year, I want you to graze the living daylight out of that grass. Grub it down, then graze it some more.

Now why would I want you to do that? Surely it will hurt the grass. Well surprise, that's exactly what I want. Because next spring, you will interseed legumes like red clover, white clover, and alfalfa into that grass to make it more nutritious.

The biggest challenge to establishing these legumes into grass sod is competition by the existing grass on new, slow growing legume seedlings. Anything you do to reduce competition and slow down grass growth will help. Overgrazing this fall prior to next spring's sodseeding will weaken the grass and slow its spring growth, thus giving new legume seedlings a better chance to get started.

And while you're at it, also collect some soil samples. Then analyze them and apply any needed fertilizer. Legumes especially need good phosphorus and soil pH.

So, plan to add some legumes to your pasture next spring. Graze your grass this fall until virtually nothing is left. Then, keep grazing a couple weeks more just to make sure.

Legumes you add next spring will establish better because of it.

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