

## OATS TO THICKEN ALFALFA

How is your hay supply? How about for next winter? Maybe you need to think about boosting yields from some older, thinning alfalfa fields this spring.

Let me paint a verbal picture for you. Just a little carryover hay following winter. Thinning alfalfa fields that dried out the last couple years. And dry soils to start the growing season.

Does this describe your operation? If so, how does your hay supply picture look for next winter? Even if you receive average rainfall from now on through the growing season, your hay tonnage could be down ten percent, twenty percent, even more from average due to stress from recent droughts and the dry soils to begin this year.

Maximizing tonnage from every inch of rain your alfalfa hay fields receive this year may be necessary. Unfortunately, alfalfa uses quite a bit of water for each ton of hay, especially as temperatures rise. So it is critical to get as much tonnage out of first cutting as possible, before summer heat sets in.

One way to boost first cutting hay yield from older, thinner alfalfa stands is to drill oats right now into those alfalfa stands. Try to get the seed about one inch deep. Oats will use spring moisture very efficiently to add tonnage to your first cutting.

Drill one to two bushels of oats per acre directly into your existing alfalfa stand as soon as possible. Where alfalfa is thick you may not get much but in thin spots the oats should fill in rapidly. Cut the hay a little later than usual to get the most yield benefit from this oat addition.

Getting the most out of each inch of moisture will be especially important this year. Using oats is one way to do it.

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