

## SEEDING ALFALFA NO-TILL

Most plantings of alfalfa begin with a conventionally tilled and prepared seedbed. No-till might be just as good, though.

How about planting alfalfa no-till? With less crop residue remaining from last year in some fields and the always present need to conserve soil moisture, no-till might be a good way to establish alfalfa this spring.

There are some obvious advantages to seeding no-till, like fuel and time savings due to fewer trips across the field. In addition, you reduce soil erosion by retaining crop residues rather than tilling them under. No-till also conserves soil moisture, which may be the best reason of all this spring. Also, due to lack of tillage the seedbed is good and firm for rapid seedling emergence. Finally, no-till will limit the number of new weed seeds near the soil surface.

Disadvantages to no-till include relying solely on clipping or post-emerge herbicides for weed control. Fortunately, we have good post-emerge herbicides available to control most weed problems. Another problem is ridges from prior row crops that can interfere with uniform seeding as well as make fields rough for future haying operations. And finally, some drills do not work well for no-till seeding so equipment might limit your options.

If you can do it, though, no-till alfalfa is worth trying. It works really well in bean stubble and almost as well in small grain stubble. No-till is a bit more difficult in corn and milo stubble, especially if there is much row ridging. Be sure to kill any early weeds with Roundup or Gramoxone before planting. And last but not least, use a drill that places seed about one-half inch deep and then covers seed with soil using a good press wheel.

Try no-till alfalfa. It could be very effective this year.

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