

FALL PLANTING SEASON

ALFALFA PLANTING

Start with a soil test or go to the file or the Coop and find the most recent soil test. Look at the pH level. Alfalfa is the most responsive crop we grow to soil pH. Lime as needed before you plant the alfalfa. Lime is a soil amendment and the most economical form is Ag lime for our area. It is more important to maintain soil cover and no-till soil structure than to incorporate the lime. It will work fine on the surface. Phosphorus levels should be at 25 parts per million or higher or additional fertilizer should be added. Watch the sulfur level also. Nitrogen is not a problem if you properly inoculate the seed. It is hard to believe that this simple basic step is sometimes missed, an expensive error.

The planting window in our area for fall seeded alfalfa is August 10 to September 10. Sow into a firm seedbed at ¼ to ½ inch deep. The best way to get a firm seedbed is to no-till the alfalfa in to existing residue. If the residue is extremely heavy or quite tall, you may want to remove some residue. Tillage is a second option and is more difficult, because we need a firm seedbed without compaction and erosion. Try to plan for success and minimize the bad things Mother Nature can do to you. I would recommend fungicide treated. Plant 10 pounds PLS (Pure Live Seed) per acre on dryland fields and 12 pounds PLS on irrigated fields. Going into wheat stubble may require spraying the volunteer wheat, because often wheat does not break dormancy until after the alfalfa is planted.

There are three categories of alfalfa seed. Common alfalfa, seed of unknown origin, which should only be used for CRP, waste area, or wildlife plantings. The next step up in both quality and price would be the blended seed. The companies offer these blends of adapted varieties under a standard name of number at a moderate price. These blends are very suitable for the beef cow producer. Pureline varieties will cost more, produce more tonnage and better quality when managed for prime hay.

WHEAT PLANTING

Wheat needs to be planted during the month of October into firm seedbeds like those of no-till fields. If the seedbed is worked for some reason, make sure it is firmed back up by rain and or harrowing operations. Planting depth for wheat should be from one inch to one and one-half inches deep. Check planting depth in every field, our large equipment and multiple farms today can have very different seedbed conditions in field a few miles apart. Shallow planted wheat is much more likely to be affected by winter injury and root and crown rot infections. Starter fertilizer is recommended with phosphorus and nitrogen. This gets the wheat off to a solid start in the variable fall weather after a summer soybean crop. Check recent soil tests on the fields for recommendations on phosphorus and sulfur needs.

Recommended wheat varieties for 2014 include Overland, SY Wolf, Freeman, McGill, Everest 1863, Camelot and Armour. These varieties have a good yield record in University of Nebraska trials and have a disease, maturity and hardiness package acceptable in Southeast Nebraska. Planting treated and certified seed is the best option. If wheat seed is kept over make sure it is cleaned and treated ahead of planting and don't violate the law by offering patented varieties for sale.

We have some good, okay and not-so-good soils in the area. Wheat should be used in the crop rotation selection once every three years with corn and soybeans on the not-so-good soils and once every five years in a corn, soybean, corn, soybean, wheat rotation on the okay soils. On the good soils wheat may be limited to a crop prior to terrace work or manure applications. It might also fit beef or sheep producers well with forage options after summer harvest. No-tilling corn into wheat stubble is a definite positive in terms of corn yields. Wheat also enhances the soil protecting carbon cover in sloping no-till fields.

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