

Opportunity to Add Legumes to Meadows and Pastures

Legumes added to grass pastures and hay meadows can improve animal productivity, increase forage yield, and reduce nitrogen fertilizer expenses. Unfortunately, adding legumes can be easier said than done. This spring, though, might be shaping up to make that job more successful.

One of the challenges to successfully adding legumes to grass sod is getting the seed into the soil. Frost seeding by broadcasting seed onto the sod has not been very successful in Nebraska. So I recommend using a drill whenever possible. Finding a suitable no-till drill to cut through the sod often is difficult, however. And regular grain drills often aren't heavy or strong enough to do the job.

This spring it might be different. The ground is soft from the winter moisture and recent rain. And it looks like it might stay that way for awhile. So your regular grain drill just might be able to cut through that soft sod, placing your legume seeds directly in contact with the moist mineral soil, nice and shallow, about one-quarter of an inch deep.

Plant your legumes during the next four weeks for the best chance of success. You probably also need to add twenty to forty pounds of phosphorus per acre to enhance legume seedling vigor. Adding some directly to the seed or banding right above the seed often is best; broadcasting also works well.

Take advantage of favorable legume interseeding conditions this spring. They'll make your grasslands better than ever.

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