

## CONTROLLING SUMMER GRASSES IN ALFALFA

Wet soils in alfalfa fields right after cutting will certainly do one thing. It will help weedy grasses like foxtail and crabgrass grow.

So, how do you reduce the amount of foxtail and other weedy grasses in your hay? Well, the best way is to start with thick and thrifty alfalfa stands that will compete aggressively with invading grasses. Thick initial stands and good soil fertility are needed. In addition, harvest alfalfa only after it begins to bloom or when new shoots appear at the base of the plants. Then alfalfa should regrow rapidly so grasses don't get much time to become a problem.

Unfortunately, this method often is easier said than done. It also may sacrifice some forage quality since harvest occurs after bloom begins. So this method may not solve all your problems.

Herbicides are another option. Roundup works great, but only for Roundup Ready varieties. In conventional alfalfa, two post-emerge herbicides that control annual grasses well are Select Max and Poast Plus. These herbicides work well on seedling grasses that are less than 4 inches tall, and alfalfa tolerates both herbicides very well. If you see these grass seedlings after you cut your alfalfa, apply the herbicides soon after harvest and before alfalfa regrowth forms a canopy. None of these herbicides have any soil residual activity, so good plant coverage of the weedy grasses is necessary for control and you may need to repeat the spraying after the next harvest if new weeds emerge.

If weedy grasses are a problem in your hay, thick and vigorous alfalfa stands and some well-chosen herbicides can help you get it under control.

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