

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SPRING SOIL MOISTURE

Do you remember when we last had soil profiles nearly completely full of moisture throughout our area? I know I don't? Because full profiles are unusual for most of us, some suggestions might be helpful as reminders of how to take advantage of your good fortune.

First consider pasture fertilization. Good moisture is needed to make full use of nitrogen fertilizer. Our university recommendations are based on available moisture for various areas. When soil moisture is high at the start of the growing season, like this year, heavier rates can be expected to produce economically higher grass yields as long as you can use the extra grass either for grazing or by cutting excess for hay. I suggest applying an extra twenty to forty pounds of nitrogen per acre this spring if you can use that extra growth.

Alfalfa production should also benefit from all this moisture. Older dryland fields probably will benefit the most since they usually extract most of the deep profile moisture within three or four years of stand life. Most of our alfalfa fields tend to be low in phosphorus, especially if they haven't had any fertilizer added for several years. If your soils would benefit from a bit more phosphorus, this is a good spring to apply it since your alfalfa should be able to make immediate use of the increased nutrition to boost hay yields.

Lastly, look to plant and fertilize annual forages. If you plant summer annual grasses or might double crop forages after wheat, take advantage of extra moisture if it remains available at planting time.

Extra moisture is valuable. Take full advantage of it this year.

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