

Spraying Roundup Ready Alfalfa

Did you plant Roundup Ready alfalfa this spring. Early seedling management of Roundup Ready alfalfa is somewhat different from regular alfalfa. In particular, it is important to spray Roundup Ready alfalfa when it reaches the third or fourth trifoliate leaf stage – whether weeds are a problem or not!

Of course, it makes sense to spray if you have weeds. Eliminating competition will help establish thicker, more productive stands more rapidly.

But why spray if weeds are not a problem. Alfalfa varieties are different from Roundup Ready corn and soybeans. Not all seedlings of Roundup Ready alfalfa will be resistant to Roundup. For most varieties, around five percent of the seedlings will be susceptible to the herbicide. So to avoid future problems with these plants dying after Roundup application, you should eliminate them while all plants are still very young.

During the seeding year, alfalfa stands naturally thin as more vigorous plants out-compete smaller plants. The surviving plants fill the gaps and become even more productive as competition is reduced. By removing Roundup-susceptible plants as young seedlings, the gaps they leave will be filled easily by remaining Roundup-resistant plants. But if you wait until the stand is well established before making your first Roundup application, gaps left as susceptible plants die may not be filled as easily.

Most weeds should be easy to control in Roundup Ready alfalfa. To make sure your alfalfa stand also remains thick and productive, spray Roundup early to eliminate all susceptible plants.

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