

GET A HEAD START ON 2016

Thanks to some favorable weather, fall field work is nearly done – or is it? Maybe you can get a jump on next year's challenges and opportunities.

I'm great at procrastinating. But when it comes to pasture and hay fields, I've learned that problem prevention and advanced preparation is the only way to make significant progress. So today, I'm giving you a laundry list of actions you can still take this fall to make your forage production better next year.

Let's begin with weeds. Many alfalfa fields are contaminated with mustards, pennycress, cheatgrass, and downy brome every spring. This doesn't have to happen. Before the ground freezes, spray Sencor, Velpar, Sinbar, or Karmex and these weeds won't be there next spring.

Similarly, you can avoid letting warm-season grass pastures get overrun by cool-season grasses and weeds. Spray glyphosate or imazapic now while these invaders are still green for cleaner pastures next summer.

Speaking of pasture, is nitrogen fertilizer getting too expensive? Adding clovers or alfalfa to your grass can eliminate your need for any nitrogen fertilizer. Prepare for making this addition by grazing one of your pastures as short as possible this fall to open it up for adding legume seeds early next spring and to slow down its spring growth rate.

Finally, pull soil samples, especially from hay fields but also from some of your pastures, and get them tested this fall. Then use the test results to order fertilizer and maybe even apply it yet this fall if weather conditions still permit.

Don't procrastinate. Act now to reduce hay and pasture problems next year and improve your forage production.

Bruce Anderson
Extension Forage Specialist
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
402-472-6237