



Establishing and Managing Alfalfa Stands

Alfalfa can be a very beneficial crop when incorporated into a row crop rotation. But like any crop, proper management is crucial to the success and longevity of your alfalfa stand. Whether you are seeding new alfalfa this spring or managing a mature to aging stand, let's review some tips to maximize your alfalfa yield.

Establishing New Alfalfa Seed

One of the most critical ways to establish a prosperous alfalfa stand is seed bed preparation. Alfalfa is usually planted $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$ inches deep. Because of that, seed to soil contact is extremely crucial. Not working the ground when the soil is too wet and not working the soil to much is key to creating an accurate seed bed. Planting into a firm seed bed will help optimize your planting depth, and ensure you have correct seed to soil contact.

Alfalfa Spring Fertility

Like any crop, alfalfa uses many different nutrients in varying amounts. Soil sampling is important to help determine the nutrients and amounts that need to be replenished. Phosphorous and potassium are the two nutrients with the largest need, and soil samples should be taken to develop a fertilizer recommendation. Topdressing nutrients is an efficient way to get nutrients to your crop, and applying right after a cutting, especially the first cutting, before regrowth begins is the best time for application. Applications after the first cutting can help stimulate the plant for the future cuttings. Since alfalfa is a legume, it gets enough nitrogen from rhizobium bacteria and organic matter in the soil. Typically, applying nitrogen to an established stand will not increase your yield. However, new seeding alfalfa can benefit from small applications of nitrogen because the root mass is not as developed, and nitrogen can help if there is a nurse crop planted with the alfalfa.

Variety Selection

Like any management decision made on your farm, selecting the right alfalfa variety is important. There are several alfalfa varieties available through LG Seeds, and picking the correct one is crucial. Some varieties, like eXterra, offer shorter, more aggressive cutting windows to optimize quality, while some varieties handle stressful acres better. Products like HG4001 allow farmers to maintain the same cutting schedule without giving up forage quality.

Whether your need is a simple conventional product, a high quality, low lignin product, or the most advanced HarvXtra, LG Seeds can help satisfy your need for high yielding Alfalfa. Talk to your local LG Seeds Team or STAR Partner to make Alfalfa part of your crop rotation.

References:

Undersander, D., Cosgrove, D., Cullen, E., Grau, C., Rice, M., Renz, M., . . . Sulc, M. (2011). *Alfalfa Management Guide*. University of Wisconsin-Extension; Minnesota Extension Service; Iowa State University Cooperative Extension Service.

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