ADVANCED AG SYSTEMS'S

Crop Soil News

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"It is the crops that feed the cows that make the milk which creates the money."

Advanced Ag Systems
Research, Education, Consulting

Fields Not Planted? Last Chance Cropping

It is now July, well past corn planting. What do we do with the fields that we still have not planted yet? Unless you are desperate for high energy forage, it is getting to late for even BMR Sorghum Sudan. You might get one cutting by the beginning of September. There are several, better options still open.

Option #1 Seed Those Fields Down. As nitrogen cost skyrockets, a tighter rotation will mean more first year corn which only needs starter nitrogen. Even second year corn after a good legume does not need the full nitrogen rate. Unfortunately, seeding down does not fill the silo's for this winter's feeding. How can we get high quality forage for top producers that are making you the money?

Option #2 Fall Spring Oats: A number of times we have planted spring oats in early August (for Albany, NY area) and it produced tremendous growth. Because of the increasingly cool fall temperatures, the forage quality was so high we called it **"green grain";** as you can see in the table at right! It is simple, but not foolproof to grow. Unless you take proper steps it can get screwed up.

Fall spring oats, fresh forage, dry matter basis, 2010	
Crude Protein	**17- 20%**
IVTD 24	**85 – 90%**
Simple Sugars	**>20%**
Kd/hr	**8 – 12 (not a misprint)**

For more northern areas, planting the end of July or the first of August is possible. For the Albany NY area we target about the 5 – 10th of August; while further south, they plant later. The reason for the delay is to wait for the cool nights of August to reduce the aphid population. We planted oats once the end of July and by the end of August all the oats were dead as aphids brought in Barley Dwarf Mosaic Virus. Cool nights with heavy dew seems to knock the aphids and reduce the potential for loss.

You need to be able to handle high yields of fall oats. Wide swath and tedding is critical for preserving the high sugar content

Plant **four to five bu/a of grain type oats**. You are maximizing the capture of rapidly decreasing sunlight and the higher population is critical to doing that sooner. Grain oats will go through its life cycle quicker and so be ready in September when you still have some heat to dry it for silage. If you are not going to be able to plant until later or have to harvest or graze later, then the slower forage oat type would be the better recommendation

Be liberal with the manure and immediately incorporate it to capture the ammonia nitrogen. In a recent 2010 study we had a relatively low yield of 2 tons/acre due to extremely dry weather. In spite of the low yields, we removed 120 lbs of nitrogen/acre as protein. Because much of this nitrogen has to be the rapidly available fraction, high manure application rates (our case, 10-12,000 gal/a immediately incorporated on low P & K) are justified.

For high producing dairy cows, mow as soon as the flag leaf is out. This forage will help to offset some of the poorer quality we were forced by weather to harvest this spring. Do not wait for the traditional "boot" stage unless you need more volume of lower quality forage. "Lower quality" is a relative term as it still is very good forage at boot stage. The reason for this is because of the very cool night temperatures inhibit respiration of the most digestible parts, and they accumulate in the plant. Frost only hits the tops and the rest of the plant keeps growing. We often have green oats in early November or until the first snow.

NOTE!: If you applied manure before planting, it is **NOT** recommended that you feed this to dry cows. In our recent study on a field that soil tested very low in potassium, with one heavy manuring potassium levels were 3.36% in the oats. In an earlier study on a high fertility field (behind the barn) we reached potassium levels of over 5%. This is NOT for dry cows.

As soon as it hits flag leaf, **mow wide swath, and TEDD** after an hour or so of drying. You are not dealing with a first cutting haylage. You are trying to dry something that can yield 2 – 3 times more tons of dry matter than a heavy first cutting. Even with wide swath, because of the weight, it comes out the back of the mower and lands with a *splat.* The high yield shear mass will allow only the top to dry. As soon as the top has a light grey cast (pick up a surface plant and see if it is greener underneath) hit it with the tedder to get the lower layers spread and drying. **It is critical that it be ensiled the same day you mow** because of the very high sugar levels. Leaving it over night burns off the sugars and produces higher populations of Clostridia and higher levels of butyric acid. With same day haylage these are reduced or eliminated even at higher moisture conditions. On the flip side, the very high sugar levels, if preserved until you ensile the crop; will speed the process and produce and excellent fermented forage.

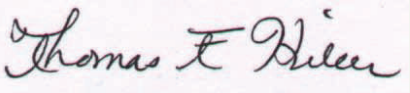
Mowing oats at 3.5 inches gave full growth to the winter triticale the next spring

Option #3 Fall Spring Oats with a Seeding of Clover and Grass. Most of the fields not planted are the wetter soils. By planting oats with the clover grass seeding in the beginning of August, you can still harvest the oats in September. The next year you will have a heavy legume grass mix without the seeding year slump to delay yields. We have successfully made same day haylage from red clover with the use of a tedder. If you are a real gambler, you can try alfalfa with the oats, but in any case with a legume underneath, reduce the oat seed rate to 3 bu/acre and remove it at the flag leaf stage. Mow at least 3.5 inches high to leave as much leaf material on the legume as possible.

Option #4 Fall Spring Oats plus Winter Triticale. This is a trial we ran last year. We planted the oats and winter triticale. After the oat harvest, the triticale continued to grow and produced an excellent forage the next year. It is **CRITICAL** that you mow the oats at a minimum of 3.5 inches. Where we did the triticale thrived. Where we mowed less than 3.5 inch the triticale died (see photos at right). We fertilized the triticale as normal the next spring and had an excellent harvest. This can give you two very high quality forage crops in one planting. It can be followed by a shorter season corn.

Mowing oats at 2.5 inches killed the winter triticale over winter

Sincerely,



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