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# Forage Newsletter

## Fall 2020



## Six Top Tips for seeding in late summer

As fall approaches, August and September is the perfect time to inspect pastures and hay fields to observe their resilience through the summer months. Whether fields have experienced dry conditions or they've endured too much moisture, pinpointing where improvements are needed must happen quickly. Even further, if stand enhancements are necessary, seeding should take place as soon as possible. Assuming one can still plant and conditions are still favorable, a late summer seeding is advantageous to areas susceptible to spring flooding or parts of the field that remain wet during the summer. Seedlings that have access to good moisture, whether from spring or from winter snow will be that much further ahead. Below are our top six reminders for ensuring late summer plantings have the best possible chance at success:

- 1) **Keep it simple – recognize what species will help the existing stand.**
- 2) **Acknowledge that fertilizer may be needed.**
- 3) **Don't skimp on seeding rates.**
- 4) **Use the correct seeding method.**
- 5) **Follow the guidelines for the correct seeding time.**
- 6) **Choose the correct variety for the region and application.**



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visit [DLFPickseed.com](https://DLFPickseed.com)

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## Prepare for hay & pasture success now!

*As we well know, there are many variables that exist purely out of our own control. Weather being the ultimate example. No matter what Mother Nature throws our way, fall allows us a short reprieve to get the basics in order in providing our forage fields the best shot at success come next spring:*

**Soil test now** - Soil testing in fall is critical for hay and pasture success. Without known fertility levels, building a forage plan is nearly impossible. Soil tests are relatively inexpensive and now when soil temperatures are warm, it's a perfect time to test soils if they haven't been tested in the last 2-3 years. Remember, when pH adjustments are expected it's crucial that limestone applications are made 6-9 months ahead of major renovations.



**Weed control** – For many problematic weeds that invade pastures and hay fields, now is the perfect time for herbicide applications. Timely applications can reduce competition and decrease weed seed population. It's a must to read and follow

label recommendations especially in relation to hay and grazing restrictions. Depending on the herbicide, deciding to apply might mean forage seedings can't be done.



**Thicken stands** – It's a good idea to thicken stands that could be vulnerable this winter. Grasses that germinate quickly are



always something to consider when time is running out in the season. Our Grasshancer™ product line benefits what remains of the existing stand plus creates new growth.

**See more at [dlfpickseed.com/ag](https://dlfpickseed.com/ag).** Ryegrass, festulolium, orchardgrass, and fescues would all classify as solid choices to thicken-up weak pastures and hay fields.





# Forage Newsletter



**“Variety selection can often be the difference between a persistent, viable stand and a short-lived, non-producing failure.”**



## Six Top Tips for seeding in late summer<sup>(cont.)</sup>

**1) Keep it simple.** Recognize what species will help the existing stand. Depending on grazing management or even weed control practices (*or herbicides*) earlier in the season, it might make sense to stick to single species additions. Planting single species into existing fields make it easier to gauge the effectiveness of the seeding. If the current stand is too thin, more species may be needed to fill in weak areas quickly.

**2) Acknowledge that fertilizer may be needed.** If fertility levels are not known, take a soil test and get it sent off quickly. Recognize that certain forage species may need additional nutrients to achieve their full benefit. For grasses, up to 150-200 lbs. of actual N are needed to maximize their production.

**3) Don't skimp on seeding rates.** Seed investments are minimal compared to time and equipment allotments. Due to the known inevitability that some seeds may not make it through the winter in certain areas of the US, it's always wise to bump up seeding rates by at least 20-25%.

**4) Use the correct seeding method.** Too many times simple broadcasting of seed (*followed by harrowing*) in the fall fails either because of weather and/or moisture, but mainly due to poor seed-to-soil contact. Seeding into a firm seedbed will allow maximum seed-to-soil contact and result in good germination and emergence. As well, no-till seeding into existing cover or crop residue can aid in establishment by reducing the chance of seed being moved by water or wind. Though many forage plantings only call for 1/8" to 1/4" seeding depth, seed needs to be in the ground, not on the ground. If limitations still call for broadcasting, make sure a cultipacker or other equipment designed to firm up soils is utilized.

**5) Follow the guidelines for the correct seeding time.** If conditions are on the drier side, don't wait too long and miss your seeding window altogether. A factor farmers usually can't control is the amount of moisture received (*unless under irrigation*). Often, it takes greater than 100% of the seed's weight in water to promote germination. Once seed germinates, keep watch. If something needs done, it might make sense to deal with it now versus later.

**6) Maybe most importantly, choose the correct variety for the region and application.** Variety selection can often be the difference between a persistent, viable stand and a short-lived, non-producing failure. Even if every other step is executed perfectly, stand establishment is still no guarantee if the wrong variety is planted.



# Forage Newsletter

## Extending the grazing season through Stockpiling

There are two main routes that can be used to extend the grazing season:

- 1) Planting cool season annual forages
- 2) Stockpiling (*easily the most economical option to extend the grazing season*)

Stockpiling is simply the process of letting a pasture paddock or hay field grow and accumulate growth to be grazed at a later date. For most of the Midwest that date is somewhere around August 15th. This August time-frame usually coincides with the best compromise between forage quality and quantity of forage stockpiled. This date is just a reference and by no means is the end of the “stockpiling season”. While beginning later (*October for example*) may result in lower tonnage numbers, high-quality forage can still be gained.

Tall fescue tends to be the best stockpiling option especially for late winter grazing, due to the fact it holds its forage quality value better and longer than other grass species, such as orchardgrass or ryegrass; however, these species can still be stockpiled under different management strategies. Some varieties we recommend for stockpiling would be:

Legumes like alfalfa and red clover can also be stockpiled but tend to lose their leaves (*leaves are at least 4 times higher in RFQ than stems*) once hard frosts set in regularly.

Planning is crucial to stockpiling, adding nitrogen will maximize growth later into the fall. Small nitrogen applications can easily increase dry matter tonnage to a rate of 20-25 to 1 (*for every 1 LB of actual N, expect up to 20-25# of DM growth per acre – assuming adequate rainfall*). Nitrogen can also improve the overall forage quality of the grass as well.

Taking paddocks out of a late summer grazing rotation as well as feeding hay may be necessary during the stockpiling period. Stockpiling pastures will allow fields to recover from any overgrazing that may have occurred during the spring and summer season. Those pastures can now build the needed energy reserves during the critical fall period. Feeding hay taken from the stockpiled forages will typically be of better quality than the first cutting taken several months earlier. First cutting hay can be lower in quality due to the quick maturing nature of grasses in the spring and subsequent seedhead formation that usually results.



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