


MESSENGER-INQUIRER

 Cooperative
Extension Service



Farm Update

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES
EDUCATION

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Maximizing Success with Frost Seedings of Clover

Hundreds of acres of pasture and hay fields are overseeded with clover each year, most of it frost-seeded in February but successful establishment is challenging. Here are some tips to ensure you have the best chance of getting clover established from a frost-seeding.

Address soil fertility needs first. Get a current soil test and apply the needed nutrients. Clovers need soil with a pH 6.5 to 7 and medium or better in P and K levels. Do not apply additional N with exception of what is in the diammonium phosphate (DAP). Remember, if you only have a small area to lime, the Daviess County Soil Conservation Service, through a funding grant by the Kentucky Agricultural Development fund has purchased a heavy-duty lime spreader that can be used with a tractor greater than 65 horsepower. This meets smaller acreage forage or cropland application needs with an opportunity to haul your own lime or have it delivered to the site, then apply it yourself. The Daviess County High School FFA Chapter has agreed to facilitate scheduling and maintenance of the spreader. The spreader is available for rent of \$100/day. This unit is for lime application only, not fertilizer or poultry litter applications. For more information or to reserve the unit, contact DCHS FFA Advisor Craig Howard at (270) 499-0694.

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Select a good variety. Choose an improved variety with known performance and genetics. Choosing a better red clover variety can mean as much as three tons of additional hay and longer stand life. Spread enough seed. UK recommends 6 to 8 pounds of red and 1 to 2 pounds of white/ladino clover per acre. Apply higher rates if using only one clover type. Applying the minimum (6 lb. red and 1 lb. white) will put over 50 seeds per square foot on the field (37 red, 18 white). UK conducts one of the best forage variety yield research programs in the country. The 2024 red and white clover report can be found online at https://forages.ca.uky.edu/variety_trials or at the Extension Office.

Make sure seed lands on bare soil. Excess grass or thatch must be grazed and/or disturbed until bare ground shows prior to overseeding. The biggest cause of seeding failure with frost seedings is excessive ground cover. Judicious cattle traffic or dragging with a chain harrow can accomplish this.

Get good seed-soil contact. With frost seeding, we depend on the rain and snow or freeze-thaw action of the soil surface to work the clover seed into the top ¼ inch of soil. A roller can also be used soon after seeding to increase soil contact.

Control competition in the spring. Do not apply additional N on overseeded fields next spring and be prepared to do timely mowing if grass or spring weeds get up above the clover. Clover is an aggressive seedling but will establish faster and thicker if grass and weed competition is controlled.

Clover can be established into existing grass pastures. Soil fertility, variety, seed rate, seed placement, and competition control are the major keys to success.

Noxious Weed Spraying Program

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The Kentucky Department of Agriculture will be offering the Noxious Weed Spraying Program to farmers in March. Signups will only be offered during the month of February and must be made on the KDA web page. <https://www.kyagr.com/agpolicy/#>. Obviously, spraying broadleaf herbicide will severely injure or kill clover growing in the field. But sacrificing the clover may be necessary if thistle, buttercup, or poison hemlock are overtaking the pasture.

The department will provide a sprayer and enough chemical to treat 10 acres of hay or pastureland for broadleaf weed suppression. The farmer must provide water, tractor, and driver.

Grass Filter Strips Focus Group

UK Extension specialists are partnering with The Nature Conservancy to learn why more people have not adopted grass filter strips. We are hosting a focus group session Wednesday, January 22 at the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Office from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. for farmers, and 5-7 p.m. for landowners who rent land to farmers. Participants will receive a gift and meal for attending. Space is limited. Register here: bit.ly/KYTNbuffers.

Closed Monday

The Extension office will close Monday, January 20 in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

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