



Meadowlark Extension District Weekly Agent News Articles

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Crops & Soils/Horticulture

The Effects of a Second Cutting (or heavy grazing!) on Brome

Adequate fall moisture has resulted in a nice recovery to forage crops this fall. Forage growth in pastures has remained strong and hay fields have recovered nicely since harvest. When we see such a nice recovery as this, there might be the temptation to try and get a second harvest of forage – or some fall grazing - out of the hay field. Can it be done? Sure! Should it be done? That depends!! Since forage management is an art and a science, the best answer can be obtained only after asking some hard questions.

First, how did the stand actually respond/recover after harvest? There may be a lot of ‘forage’ out there, but is it really anything good? Summer annual forages like foxtail, crabgrass, and others also used the moisture to their advantage and responded very nicely as well. If they are the predominant species, is that what you want for hay? Weed pressure also seems to be high this fall.

Second, how healthy IS the stand? Well over half of our brome hay fields are deficient in Phosphorous according to soil test results. Low soil test levels can lead to less plants per square foot, decreased winter hardiness, and slower spring green up. IF that describes your stand, a harvest or heavy grazing at this point may only make that worse.

Why? During fall, forage regrowth is what produces energy to be stored in grass roots. If we cut again, we run the risk of depleting leaf area to a point that root reserves are being depleted to regrow instead of being replenished for winter. If a second cutting or heavy grazing pressure doesn't allow a second round of ‘replenishment’ to occur, we can run in to trouble!

This fall has provided a great opportunity for our grass stands to go in to winter with very nice growth. That can help with spring prescribed burns (but only if absolutely necessary on our cool season forage stands!) as well as giving us plenty of photosynthetic area with which we can replenish energy to root systems for next spring. Some grazing pressure – so long as it leaves a four to five inch stubble height by the time of a killing frost – might be acceptable. A second cutting of hay? Probably an idea you should reconsider.

Conservation Tree Planting Program

If you got your windbreak all ready to plant this spring – then didn't get it done, you've got a second chance!

Sure, a spring planting is yet again a possibility, but if you don't mind paying a little more for containerized tree species – and getting them planted here shortly – you can order conservation trees from the Kansas Forest Service's Conservation Tree Planting Program right now! The fall ordering season runs through October 14th.

Species available include containerized Black Hills Spruce, Bur Oak, Eastern Redcedar, Eastern White Pine, Fragrant Sumac, Pecan, Ponderosa Pine, Redbud, Southwestern White Pine, and Swamp White Oak. All orders are in bundles of 25 trees for \$50.00. Non-Plant Materials like Rabbit Protective Tubes and Weed Barrier Fabric and Pins are also available.

Pick up an order form and price list from your District Extension Office or visit www.kansasforests.org .

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