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No Easy Answers

Winter is typically a good time for catching up on bookwork or attending winter meetings. If you're still making decisions about what to do with fall armyworm injury from last summer, it's also a good time to take another look at affected fields.

A good first step if you haven't already is a damage assessment. Without snow on the ground, you'll likely still be able to make out where the worst feeding occurred and, in some cases, whether there might be much grass left. Even in the worst areas it's possible plants will respond in spring, but with the extended growing season we had last fall, many stands had a chance to recover and are likely already showing thin areas fairly well. You may even be able to feel differences as you walk/drive across them, giving you an idea of the areas that will at the very least be thinner and likely less productive this season.

Recovery OR reseeding will both benefit from a good fertility program. If you don't have a recent soil test, take one now. We focus on nitrogen to push production, but stand maintenance from adequate pH, phosphorous, and potassium levels is also important.

If the stand is going to be left as is, the assessment should include an evaluation of weed pressure. Thin stands will likely see increased weed pressure warranting herbicide applications where they might not have before. If grass overseeding/legume interseeding is being considered, herbicide restrictions may exist. Always read and follow product labels.

If the stand is going to be converted to another crop (row crop, summer annual forage, oats, etc...), herbicide and fertility issues will still be important with a need to look ahead as well. Management may be different for seeding back to brome versus seeding to a different forage, versus a departure from forage production altogether. It can quickly become a complex discussion but can help guide current decisions as well.

There are no easy answers, but if you haven't already, it's time to start at least exploring the options. Drop me a line if we can be of assistance. You can also check out video from last fall's Brome Recovery meetings at <https://www.youtube.com/@meadowlarkextensiondistrict> for a deeper dive into what to consider as you do so.