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Forage Seeding Date Resources

The last decade has seen multiple stressors impacting forage stands. Declining fertility levels coupled with multiple dry falls and a couple of rounds of fall armyworm feeding - plus other farm level challenges - have resulted in some perennial grass stands potentially benefiting from everything from overseeding to reseeding.

Every situation is unique and a one size fits all recommendation is impossible. If trying to overseed a stand, issues like weed pressure have to be considered. If you're going to have to spray in the spring, can what you overseed or interseed or newly seed survive the application?

You also need to know what you hope to accomplish by the seeding. Requirements for grazing can be significantly different than if the seeding will be taken as a hay crop. Are you trying to simply thicken a stand with the existing forage, or add some diversity? The answers to those questions might affect your approach as well.

As you consider your options, consider appropriate seeding windows as well. Seeding recommendations are designed to achieve the greatest opportunity for successful forage establishment (maximizing return on seeding cost is important) with some flexibility as well.

There are lots of sources of excellent information when it comes to seeding window recommendations. Your seed supplier likely has experience. If the seeding is part of an agency cost share program, they may have requirements to meet as well. For additional guidance, or to help you explore what your options might be (who knows what weather might be like during the 'optimum' seeding window...), consider these two resources.

The Kansas Crop Planting Guide (available via any District Office or online at https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/kansas-crop-planting-guide_L818.pdf) provides recommended seeding dates based on your area of the state. For our commonly planted crops, this is a great first stop.

If you want to explore some less traditional crops, especially if looking for a 'stopgap' annual forage to fill a spot, consider the Midwest Cover Crops Council Selector Tool. This web based tool (<https://www.midwestcovercrops.org/selector-tools/>) uses information about location, current crop, etc... combined with your desired output for the crop to make recommendations. For example, you may not need a true cover crop but are looking at crops for grazing. The tool allows you to select up to three desired parameters with an output showing recommended planting windows. If you want to find out more about specific aspects of the crop, a click on the forage provides that as well. This tool is of particular value if you are looking at more non-traditional forages to include in your system.

What these resources do not provide is a guarantee of success. Weather will be a huge factor in seeding success. Competition from weeds is a concern, but so also is competition from existing forages (established plants have a huge competitive advantage over new seedlings). All these factors have to be considered as part of the seeding process. Make sure a less than desirable seeding window doesn't complicate matter further with these resources as a starting point.