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Forage Recovery After Fall Armyworm Feeding

Some would suggest an answer isn't really an Extension answer until it includes the phrase: it depends. Unfortunately, the situation we find ourselves in with many brome stands damaged by fall armyworms is going to be dependent on past history with a look to the future.

Fortunately, many stands have recovered nicely. Continue to monitor them through next spring. Unless regrowth has been adequate following feeding, root reserves may still be low, resulting in slower green-up next spring and potentially thinned stands. The longer the growing season, the better the chance we'll fully replenish root reserves. Recovered stands should be managed as normal: good fertility (a soil test is highly recommended) plus appropriate harvest management next summer will be key.

Stands just beginning to recover – or still without signs of life – should be given a chance to respond if possible during what's left of our growing season. While we won't fully know the extent of damage until green-up next spring, most stands should be showing signs of life by now. Consider digging up plants to check for tillers or live roots. In many cases, adequate time has passed since the last feeding to allow plants to respond. What's next in these cases?

Walk fields now to assess how much of the stand may have been compromised so you can start to make decisions about the future of the stand. While there, pull a soil sample. No matter what decision you make for the stand, a soil sample provides valuable information.

If only small areas are compromised and you plan to inter- or over-seed, or otherwise keep the stand in brome even if it requires starting over, investigate seed supplies/costs. The seeding rate recommendation for a well-prepared seedbed is 10-15 pounds of pure, live seed per acre. Lesser prepared seedbeds may benefit from rates up to 20 pounds per acre. Optimum winter/spring seeding dates for northeast Kansas are December through early April. Evaluate fertility levels and previous herbicide histories prior to seeding.

There are lots of options for stands considered too far gone and in which brome will not be reseeded, all dependent to a great degree on how the site lays and the fertility and herbicide restrictions in place. Native grasses, annual forages, or even cropping may be considerations, so long as you can do so with an eye towards appropriate conservation practices and compliance with any government programs, fertility issues, or herbicide restrictions.

With predictions for high fertilizer prices through spring plus potential forage losses from fall armyworm damage this past summer, now is a good time to begin the planning process to make sure forage resources are in place for next growing season and beyond.

Perennial Garden Clean-up

To clean up or not to clean up the perennial bed. That's the question. Here's some tips.

Plants with insect or disease issues, should be cut back. If not, consider leaving them to provide structure, form, and color to the winter garden. Ornamental grasses are one example – so long as they aren't next to a structure or pose a fire hazard. Perennials with evergreen or semi-evergreen foliage can provide color as well – so long as they aren't too 'messy'. Plants with seed heads can provide valuable bird habitat. If they aren't causing any of the aforementioned issues, they can be left, as should plants requiring foliage be left to ensure overwintering of plant crowns (tender ferns, for example).

Nancy Nelson
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Family Life

Should I Let My Child Win?

Parents may have the tendency to back off on winning when they're playing games with their children, but is that good for the child's development?

K-State Research and Extension child development specialist Bradford Wiles encourages adults to be "judicious" in the effort they put toward winning.

"I'm not saying you let them win every time, but you don't want to crush interest by demonstrating your skill as an adult over the child," he said. "I'd like to think that's elementary, but I know in practice that doesn't always happen."

"There's pushback toward the participation trophy and children winning every time, but that doesn't mean that they shouldn't win 90 percent of the time when they're kids. They need to understand mastery and a sense that they can do things, and that's much more valuable than the ability to lose well at a young age."

Parents could instead focus on adding progressively bigger challenges as the child grows older.

"What you're talking about is what (researchers) call the zone of proximal development," Wiles said. "It's this area where children can learn really well with just a little help from adults. You want the goal to be just a little out of reach from their current ability so that with a little help they can get to that goal. What happens is they understand the pathway to get to that goal and they can replicate that."

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No news today