

Consider These Things When Hauling Manure

BROOKINGS — Livestock manure nutrients are a valuable resource available to crop farmers in South Dakota.

When obtaining manure from an outside livestock facility, especially from an out-of-state facility, crop farmers are encouraged to ask about environmental permits at the state and county level, explains Erin Cortus, SDSU Extension Air Quality and Waste Management Specialist.

“There are a couple different things that need to be considered when purchasing manure and hauling it across state lines. Is the facility you’re buying the manure from considered a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) or not? If this out-of-state facility is not considered a CAFO, then the general permit restrictions don’t apply,” said Cortus, during a recent iGrow Radio Network interview.

However, she adds, if the livestock facility is permitted, then the permitted livestock operation must include the partnering crop farmer’s acreage in their nutrient management plans, and have all needed documentation in place with the state to ensure the manure is being used properly. This includes a written agreement, Cortus explains.

“If your land is included as part of another producer’s nutrient management plan, the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources will need a written agreement from the land owner,” said Cortus, adding that similar steps need to be taken when manure is hauled from a permitted facility within South Dakota. This responsibility falls on the livestock producer.

She also encourages farmers, before purchasing manure, to ask if the manure has been manipulated so they understand what they will be receiving. Manipulated manure can be considered a soil amendment or fertilizer and different distribution and storage rules therefore apply.

“Manipulating manure can include drying, cooking, grinding, adding other materials, pelletizing or composting, according to South Dakota Department of Agriculture,” she said.

Cortus advises anyone dealing with livestock manure to handle and apply the nutrients in a responsible manner.

For more information on this topic, visit iGrow.org.

Artificial Insemination School In Worthing

BROOKINGS — Artificial Insemination (AI) is a valuable tool available to cow/calf producers. To teach commercial cow/calf producers how to utilize this tool, SDSU Extension is sponsoring an AI School April 25-27 at 1 p.m. at the Sioux Falls Regional Livestock facility near Worthing, with additional classroom time at the Sioux Falls Regional Extension Center.

The AI School will include both classroom instruction as well as hands-on training that will cover the basics of AI and practice reproductive tracts.

To ensure producers receive plenty of hands on time, the class is limited to 20 participants. Registration is \$325 and covers costs of materials and cows to practice on.

To register, contact Carol Kleinjan at the SDSU Animal Science Department, Carol.Kleinjan@sdstate.edu or 605-688-5165). Don’t wait to register as the class is expected to reach its limit soon. There will be a waiting list for future classes.



PHOTO: RITA BRHEL

Early Alfalfa

Still Early To Assess Frost Damage in Alfalfa

BROOKINGS — For most alfalfa fields damaged earlier this week by frost, it will be difficult to assess the damage for at least a week, says Eric Mousel, forage and alfalfa specialist for Millborn Seeds, Brookings.

“In established stands, it will take at least that much time to determine if the top growth was damaged or whether the stems will recover,” Mousel said. “The growing point is the initial development source of new leaves and stem on the main stem of alfalfa. The growing point is located inside the dense cluster of unfolded leaves at the top of the main stem.”

Mousel explains that when the growing point is frosted off, the stem will die and new growth must come from new shoots at the crown.

“Although the plant itself is not dead, the new growth will be delayed. Cutting off damaged plants will hasten recovery,” he said. “If the growing point was not frosted off, the current growth may wilt for a few days and then regain its upright stature once it gets warm again.”

He adds that new alfalfa seedlings are generally very tolerant of cold temps, partially from heat from the soil and partially from natural plant tolerance. Seedlings no older than first trifoliate growth stage will probably handle temps in the low 20’s. As they advance in growth, cold tolerance lessens. Seedlings at the 3rd or 4th trifoliate stage can be difficult to diagnose. If leaf tissue is just singed by frost, they probably will recover slowly.

“If your new seedling is frozen to the ground — it’s dead. Reseed or plant to another crop as soon as possible,” Mousel said. “Last years’ late summer planting will probably respond similar to an established stand, although recovery will probably be a lot slower. It’s only early April, so give these plants a little time before you decide to cut, shred, or reseed. Sounds like more cold temps are on the way, we’ll see what happens.”

To learn more about reseeding options, contact Eric Mousel at ericm@millbornseeds.com, or 605-697-6306.

Spring’s Early Start Has Alfalfa Rolling Strong, But Some Cold Realities Still Lurk

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

Alfalfa stands are off to a strong start this spring, already more than a foot tall in many fields. It appears that those in the hay business have the potential of seeing bumper harvests this year, but producers are right to have a couple concerns.

At the top of the list is the question of whether cutting alfalfa earlier than usual can damage future growth. However, University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s Extension forage specialist Bruce Anderson says not to worry.

“If your alfalfa reaches its usual stage of growth for cutting, like early bloom, several weeks early, go ahead and harvest. The plants will regrow just as well as they have in previous years,” he said, as long as the area doesn’t receive a killing freeze.

Many producers recall what happened in 2007 when, after a prolonged period of unseasonably warm temperatures, night-time temperatures dropped into the lower 20s for a short time, resulting in severe, widespread damage. That memory is undoubtedly what is driving this spring’s concerns about producers moving too quickly with their alfalfa, Anderson said.

“Much of the alfalfa froze clear to the ground. Such a sudden deep freeze is very unusual, and the alfalfa reacted like it had just been cut for hay but at way too early a growth stage,” he said. “Regrowth occurred, but it was slow due the poor timing of the freeze.”

Diseases and insect pests are also harder on alfalfa that receives a killing freeze because of the stress of the freeze overwhelms the plant’s natural defenses.

More likely this spring is a light frost. Unlike a freeze, a frost will only damage the top of the plants rather than the whole plant. Surprisingly, this is more difficult to deal with.

“Cutting will weaken plants that weren’t nearly ready to cut anyhow, but plants will be confused,” Anderson said. “Some will continue to grow and others will create new

shoots from above or below the ground.”

The best option in this case, as with a freeze, will probably be to wait for the plant to recover on its own time. Producers who grow high-quality hay, however, may prefer to cut, although the stand will need extra time to recover from the cutting.

While producers are most concerned with a possible frost or freeze, there is another challenge happening earlier than usual this year that producers need to be aware of — the alfalfa weevil. While these overwintering alfalfa insect pests can normally be found active in alfalfa stands by end of March or early April, this year’s spring is at least one month to six weeks ahead of schedule and that means the weevils are, too. Fields across the Midwest are reporting weevil populations already over the threshold indicating the need for treatment, which is either cutting the hay early or applying an insecticide.

Harvesting can be done 10 days before the planned first cutting and saves insecticide cost and loss of beneficial insects, but spraying improves feed value of the hay.

“To treat depends on the average number of weevils per stem, the stem length, and the value of the alfalfa,” said Keith Jarvi, UNL Extension educator in Dixon County. “When alfalfa reaches a certain height, it may be more profitable to cut the alfalfa early rather than to treat, but cutting early also depends on excellent drying conditions for curing hay.”

For the most part, this year looks to be a promising year for alfalfa growers if the area can avoid a freeze reminiscent of 2007. While the probability of this happening again is low, nothing about the last six months of weather has been predictable. It’s always good for growers to have a plan just in case, Anderson said.

“If you get that hard a freeze again this spring and alfalfa growth is enough to economically harvest, go do it immediately,” he said. “Chances are, though, that it will go down before you get to harvest. In that case, just let it be. It will come back on its own, although slowly.”

Strategic Planning Can Pay Off In Production Agriculture

BROOKINGS — Like most businesses, farming and ranching can benefit from periodic strategic planning says Jack Davis, SDSU Extension Economics Field Specialist, during a recent iGrow Radio Network interview.

“Strategic planning takes a long range look at the business to determine how it may compete in the future,” Davis said.

He explains that strategic planning evaluates both external and internal factors to identify oppor-

tunities and challenges.

External factors include things outside the farm, such as interest rates; while internal factors can be broken into four general areas — production, marketing, human resources and finance. Davis says useful metrics are available to assist with internal check-ups.

“We want to take a look and see how do we stack up production wise? How are our farm resources? Do we have a good line of equipment? Are we producing at high

levels for our resources? So, taking a hard look at those internal factors and measuring them against some standards,” Davis said.

Davis says producers can work with their financial lenders and SDSU Extension Economics Field Specialist to locate nationally published standards to see how their operation compares. In depth

strategic planning is recommended at least once every five years or when considering major business changes.

“Say we have a younger partner coming in, or we’re looking at expansion or we want to do some changes, strategic planning is a good process to go through,” Davis said.

For more information on this topic, visit iGrow.org.

The iGrow Radio Network and SDSU Extension bring listeners an informative show each day. For more information on the iGrow Radio Network, or to listen to archived shows, visit www.igrow.org.

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