



WALKING FIELDS

COVID-19 & SPRING PLANS

There is no way that we can cover all the changes and craziness that go along with COVID-19 in this newsletter. Farmers may feel their odds of contracting COVID-19 are less because of the remote nature of the business, but one very important preparation that growers should consider is making a Planting Contingency Plan. In the event that the grower or other critical workers become sick, a Planting Contingency Plan would help others execute your planting season plans for 2020. The plan does not need to be elaborate or pretty, it does need to be in writing and include essential details. Those details would likely include ; field maps, seed placement plans, fertility and herbicide programs, tillage operations, planting populations, and pre-paid contracts with seed, fertilizer, chemical and fuel suppliers. Other small details, like tricks to start the forklift or location of the keys to the fuel tanks, could be very useful to someone who is helping plant your crop if you become sick. Growers have a limited window and only one shot to get a crop planted correctly. This is a challenge in any year but the COVID-19 pandemic adds another layer of complexity. Farmers are strong and independent people who always come through for thier neighbors and community. Prepare a plan and hope it is not needed. National Corn Growers Association has more information and resources on COVID-19 on the farm.

SOIL TEMP DECISIONS

SOIL CONDITIONS & TEMPS FOR PLANT 2020

We all know corn and soybeans need soil temperatures of 50° or above to germinate but should we all wait until the soil thermometer hits 50° to put the planter in the ground? Its tough to provide a simple answer.

Once corn seed is planted it will start to imbibe water. This happens no matter what the soil temperature. Once the seed absorbs 30% of its weight in water the radicle (root) and coleoptile (shoot) will begin to grow if soil temperatures are 50° or above. If the soil is colder, the seed will absorb water but not initiate growth. This will lead to seed rots and poor or variable emergence if exposed to these conditions for extended periods of time. Soybeans are more sensitive to soil temperature within 24-48 hours of planting when they are imbibing moisture. Once they enter the osmotic (germination) phase they can tolerate short spans of soil temperatures from 35-40° but thrive in 50° and above.

So, should we wait? Depending on the number of acres to be planted, seedbed conditions, soil moisture and forecasted temperatures; no, do not wait. If soil temperatures are near 50° with a forecast

favorable to get to 50° quickly, put the seed in the ground. Vast improvements in seed treatments and seedling vigor can help overcome some adverse conditions shortly after planting. So, plant when able, given good seedbed conditions.

Seedbed conditions are critical when planting corn and soybeans before 50° soil temperatures. An evenly prepared soil that is not cloddy and has ample moisture will generate the best results. Be sure conditions are consistent from soil surface to the planting depth of the crop.

Yields are more stable early in the planting season than late. Corn being planted 10 days earlier than the optimum conditions is a safer practice than planting 10 days after the window. If you wait for perfect conditions to start planting, a portion of your crop could be planted past the optimum yield window. This comes with a bigger yield penalty.

If soil temperatures are close to 50°, the seedbed conditions are good and there is a favorable forecast; pull the trigger and get the seed in the ground.



1ST CUT ALFALFA

TIMING AND MANAGEMENT

The timing of the first cut will likely determine the cutting schedule for the rest of the season. The cutting schedule will align with what a producer values most; harvested yield, feed quality and persistence of the stand. A “three summer-cut” system focuses on yield and persistence, but to provide high quality feed requires a grower to focus more on feed quality. To strike a good balance of yield and quality it is recommended that the first cutting be harvested at the late-bud to first-flower stage and to make cuttings at 30-35-day intervals. With Spring weather variables growers must monitor fields closely for proper timing of the first cutting. One method is to use the Predictive Equations for Alfalfa Quality (PEAQ) stick. The PEAQ stick has multiple measurements that helps predict RFV by measuring the height and stage of the most mature plant in a two square foot representative area of the field. Scissor clippings at harvest height that are submitted to a forage lab are another effective way to monitor crop quality leading up to the first cutting. About 30 days after cutting, the alfalfa will be re-entering the bud stage. After the first cutting, early to mid-bud should be targeted for high quality feed, late-bud to mid-bloom for beef quality forage.



MANAGING N, S & B

HOW TO GET THE MOST OF OUR LEACHABLE NUTRIENTS

How do you make sure that your crop is utilizing nutrients that can be leached out of the root zone? There are many resources discussing Nitrogen management. The main techniques would be to apply specific amounts when the crop needs Nitrogen or to stabilize Nitrogen within the soil by means of a physical encapsulation or other biological methods. Other very important leachable nutrients that are commonly overlooked are Sulfur and Boron. Sulfur is critical to corn, soybean and alfalfa production and is just as leachable as Nitrogen. Sulfur can be managed by making applications when plants need the nutrient or utilizing multiple sources of the nutrient, some that are more readily available like AMS and some that are more stable and less available in the soil like elemental S. Boron can improve an alfalfa crop. Because it is leachable it is best to apply Boron early in the season so actively growing plants can take it up. Fall applied Boron and S on alfalfa is not effective after plants go dormant.

HAY EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

MOWER CHECKLIST

Well maintained hay equipment can help you harvest better quality forage that contains less ash, it can help speed drying times and improve efficiency while harvesting. Keeping the cutter bar in good working order with sharp knives is critical. Gear boxes and drive lines also need to be in good shape to avoid lost time and unharvest stems in the field. Conditioning systems need to be adjusted properly and checked for even wear across the conditioning width. Areas with higher volumes of forage traveling through, middle sections, tend to wear faster. Conditioning roll clearance should be within 1/16 to 3/32nds of an inch. This is also a good time to evaluate cutting height and angle by making adjustments to the machine. Rakes, mergers, tedders and other hay equipment should also be checked for broken or worn parts and adjusted to ensure they are level and tines are even and in good working order.

FOLLOW & SHARE OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL – [LEGACY SEEDS AGRONOMY](#)