



ADVANCED AG SYSTEMS'S

Crop Soil

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"It is the crops that feed the cows that make the milk which creates the money."

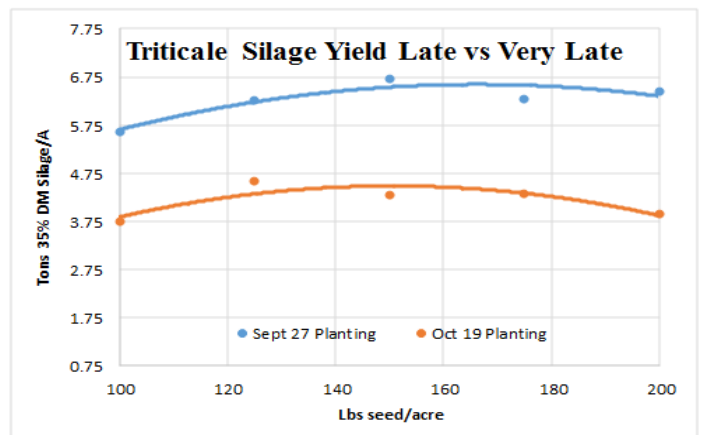
Are We To Late for Winter Forage?

The fall has been a range of weather conditions on the farms of our readers. Some have had nice warm and dry weather while others struggled with rain. In about all the areas, there was a delay in corn harvest due to the cool weather this summer, late planting, or re-planting due to rain or a combination of both. Many farms are still working on corn silage harvest.

There are a number of farms that are also very short on forage, after coming off of back to back bad years, plus the expanse of northern regions that had their alfalfa winter-killed. The earliest emergency forage for next spring you can plant is a winter grain. We have been suggesting winter triticale forage for a number of years year due to the higher quality, standability, and yield from the improved varieties on the market, compared to rye or winter wheat. Our management studies the past 10 years confirms that for higher yields from a greater number of tillers, planting early is strongly suggested. Ok, it is now the beginning of October. Should I give up on winter forage, especially winter triticale? **NO**. Our suggestions of planting early for high yield are being misinterpreted as you only can plant triticale early or not at all. **THIS IS INCORRECT**. We plant corn about the beginning of May for optimum yield. We also plant on May 15, June 1, and in some really bad years on June 15. Yes, yield goes down when we plant corn later, but **YOU DO GET A CROP**. When short on forage you need a crop early as possible.

WINTER TRITICALE IS NO DIFFERENT. There is an optimum time, and then there is the time that each year, soil conditions, and weather leave you. Planting later you still get yield, just somewhat less compared to planting a month earlier. Our plantings in our variety trial were put in September 11 last year and ran from 3.5 – 4.25 tons of dry matter (10 – 12 tons) of silage/acre. What if we missed that early date as many will this year?

In the graph at the right, a 2006 seeding rate study, we planted somewhat late – September 27 for our "early" date. We also planted "very late" on October 19. Each seeding rate at each date was 4 replications. The average yield of silage was 6.27 tons of 35% DM silage (2.19 tons DM) for the "early" date. The very late date was 33% less and averaged 4.17 tons of 35% DM silage (1.46 tons of DM).



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REMEMBER: DATE OF PLANTING DOES NOT CHANGE FORAGE QUALITY, ONLY THE QUANTITY

(see picture at right). What farmer would not want to pull off over 4 tons silage/acre of some of the highest quality forage you can produce, and do it in mid-May when nothing else is ready to harvest? Maturity, if delayed at all, is only a day or two.

If you are forced to plant later, **planting depth becomes more critical** as you have smaller root system to keep the plant from heaving out and dying in the spring. Last year a number ignored the 1.25 inch (3.18 cm) deep minimum planting depth suggestion and lost the crop. In addition, by minimum tilling the soil before planting, you will leave more voids to reduce heaving, and produce deeper, rapid increase in the winter forage roots. All of this aids in reducing the potential killing from heaving over the winter. Note: **at this late date** for our area (Albany, NY) and further north, preliminary research indicates that there is **NO response to fall nitrogen** so save your money, just get the seed in the ground at the proper depth as soon as possible.



Move on Rotations This Month

Rotations start with taking out a sod field, and finish by seeding a row crop back to hay again. **NOW** is the time to make those decisions. **Sod fields sprayed in the fall** can be no-till, zone tilled, or one pass minimum till planted in the spring for a tremendous savings in time, fuel, and soil. In our more variable weather years such as this, it is the difference between a crop and none as the planting windows open and close quickly. For \$15 of herbicide and application, less than the cost of moleboard plowing and disking, the sod can be completely killed. For our area we target October 1 to October 15. The later you wait, the less control you have of the old alfalfa. The next spring the soil is dry, warm, mellow, and loose enough for no till planting. The tough perennials are under control so spring herbicide can be a simple, low cost mix. The table below can help you determine if you should keep, or kill, an old sod field.

Harvest Year	Optimum Stand	Adequate Stand
New Spring Seeding	25-45	12-20
1st Full Hay Year	12-20	6-10
2nd Full Hay Year	8-12	4-6
3rd and Older Hay Year	4-8	2-5

Sincerely,

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Hand
to Better
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