

Top 10 Tips for Forage Establishment

Successful forage establishment involves planning, preparation and management. Considering the tips listed in this document for forage establishment can go a long way to ensure a successful forage stand and improve profitability for your grower.

1. **Control weeds the year prior to seeding** – perennial weeds are highly competitive with the potential to reduce yields and quality of a forage crop in subsequent years. Once a stand is established, weeds are more difficult and costly to remove as herbicide options are reduced.
2. **Watch residual herbicide carryover** – residual herbicides can adversely impact stand establishment.
3. **Ensure a good preseed burnoff** – apply at least 1 L/acre of glyphosate. Depending on the forage or blend being seeded, some tank mix options are available.
4. **Spring seeding gives best chance of establishment** – benefits of spring seeding include less weed competition, better use of spring moisture and reduced winterkill.
5. **Ensure a firm, smooth seedbed** - Clean, standing cereal stubble works well.
6. **Seed shallow** – seed no more than ½ inch with good packing, using proper seeding rates to ensure good seed to soil contact and even germination. In lighter soils can seed up to ¾ inch.
7. **The best time to fertilize a forage crop is at seeding** – No more than 15 lb of P₂O₅ can be seed placed. Consider applying higher rates of phosphorus, potassium and elemental sulfur to provide a long-term, source of nutrition for the crop. Consider including legumes to help fix nitrogen.
8. **For variety/forage blend selection – know your end use** – Keep blends simple, especially if the field is relatively uniform.
9. **Know your soil type and degree of limitations, such as salinity, eroding or flooding issues.**
10. **If using a nurse crop** seed at 1/3 to 1/2 of normal rates and use a relatively non-competitive crop such as oats. Harvest it early to minimize competition.

For further information please contact your local Grow Team Advisor.