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**AGRIVIEW**

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**Establishment of a grass is an important and critical phase of any pasture plan. A good pasture program incorporates many activities - such as weed control, fertility and management - to reach the desired forage production. Because of the investment in money and time, to say nothing of the worry involved, grass land establishment should be a well-planned phase of a pasture program. A step-by-step plan of action can make the difference between a productive stand of grass or another year of waiting.**

**A well prepared seed bed will help obtain fast germination, a uniform stand and insure seedling survival. To obtain best results, the seed bed should be smooth and firm with moisture throughout the soil profile. Obtaining this type of seed bed takes time and effort.**

**As little disturbance of the soil as possible is best near planting time to conserve soil moisture and retain the settled seed bed. If the soil is loose or cloddy near planting, roll with a roller or cultipacker to firm the soil and crush clods.**

**Lime, if needed should be applied before seed bed preparation so that it can be worked in the soil profile. It is important to adjust the soil pH before establishing a permanent pasture. Once the pasture becomes established it is difficult to adjust the subsoil pH. Lime can be applied to the soil surface but it moves very slowly down the soil so it**

should be disked in. Use fine grind lime.

Phosphorus and potassium also need to be applied during seed bed preparation so that they can be worked into the soil. These elements do not leach very readily and can be applied early. Nitrogen fertilizer should be applied in the spring after the grass has germinated. Early applications of nitrogen cause a greater weed problem.

Determine the variety of grass you want to plant, and find a source of seeds or sprigs. Target a planting time, seeding or sprigging rate and the best method of planting for the variety of grass you want to plant. Done well ahead of time, this will eliminate bottle necks.

Use good quality sprigs that are dug from a weed free field and are free of bahia or common bermudagrass. Utilize sprigs from an area that contains only the variety you are planting.

Bermuda grass should be sprigged at a rate of 40 bushels per acre. This will provide a good stand the first year. A lower rate of seeding may not completely cover the ground the first year. A higher sprigging rate will give a faster rate of coverage.

Most bermudagrass are reproduced by vegetative transplants. It is most important to remember that these sprigs, may be either stolens, rhizomes or roots, and are living tissue of the parent plant that have been removed from their normal environment. In the transplanting process, these vegetative sprigs are separated from the parent plant and put down in a new environment. This is a shock to the transplanted plant. For this reason, the utmost care should be given the sprigs in the transplant process. Sprigs should be protected from drying out which would, in effect, kill them. It naturally follows that heat and wind

are the two drying agents to naturally control. Keep the sprigs as moist as possible. Water them down and put a tarpaulin over them to protect from sun and wind. Do not use sprigs that have been out of the ground for several days unless they have been adequately protected from drying.

When planting bermudagrass it is best to use a machine that is designed to open a furrow, drop the sprig in, cover it properly and firm the soil down around the sprig. There are planting machines designed to do this and some are equipped to add a light “starter” fertilizer in the process. Many producers will broadcast sprigs and fertilizer on the ground and disk them in. Sprigs left on top of the soil will dry out and die.

After the sprigs have been planted, it is highly desirable to firm the sprigs and soil together by means of some type of roller. This roller operation puts the sprigs into good contact with the soil, conserves moisture and presses out small air pockets into the soil.

#### TERMITE TROUBLE:

Subterranean termites are the most destructive insect pests of wood. In nature, they scavenge wood, breaking down the large amounts of dead trees and other wood which accumulate in forests. The breakdown products of wood are returned to the soil as humus. Problems begin when termites invade human structures. Their presence is not readily noticed and damage often is discovered before the termites are seen. The homeowner can practice prevention, but successful chemical control nearly always requires the services of qualified pest control operators.

Subterranean termites are found throughout the United States except Alaska. These wood-destroying insects are found throughout Texas, decreasing in frequency from the Gulf Coast to central regions. Termites represent a great hazard to wooden structures in

these areas.

Subterranean termites are social insects that live in nests or colonies in the soil. Three termite forms or castes are found in the colonies - reproductives, workers and soldiers. Individuals of each caste have three growth stages - egg, nymph and adult.

Reproductives can be winged (primary) or wingless (secondary). Each has the capability to produce new offspring. Primary reproductives, also called swarmers or alates, vary in body color from coal black to pale yellow-brown. The wings may be pale or smokey gray to brown and have few distinct veins. Swarmer termites are about 1/4 to 3/4 inches long and make up the largest number of individuals within a colony. Workers gather food, enlarge and maintain the nest, and feed and care for all other castes in the colony.

Soldiers resemble workers in color and general appearance. However, they have large, well-developed, brownish heads with strong mandibles or jaws. Soldiers defend the colony against invaders, primarily ants. Soldiers in some types of termites generally occurring in arid regions are called nasutes. Nasute soldiers have pear-shaped heads with a long, tube-like projection on the front. They exude a sticky substance to entrap their enemies.

Ants and termites often swarm around the same time of year. It is important to distinguish swarming ants from termites because control measures for both are quite different in technique and price.

Termites will have straight antennae, two pair of equal length wings, no eyes and a thick waist - ants on the other hand will exhibit an elbowed antennae, 2 pair of unequal length wings, eyes and a thin waist.

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