

**February 6, 2014**

**AGRIVIEW**

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**County Extension Agent**

**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.

#### GARDEN CORNER:

Regardless of the soil in your garden, it can be improved by adding organic matter. If your soil is heavy clay, the addition of organic matter improves both drainage and aeration and also allows better root development. Liberal amounts of organic matter help sandy soil hold water and nutrients.

Where do you get organic matter? This magical stuff which improves soil and serves as a food source for soil fungi and bacteria comes in the form of peat moss, compost, hay, grass clippings, barnyard fertilizer, shredded bark, leaves or even shredded newspapers.

When adding organic matter to soil, supply enough to physically change the soil structure. Ideally, at least one-third of the final soil mix should be some type of organic material. To accomplish this, spread a 2 to 4 inch layer of organic material over the garden

surface and till it to a depth of at least 6 to 10 inches. Apply the recommended rate of fertilizer over the garden surface at the same time, and till it in along with the organic material.

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

- February 6th - East Texas Turfgrass Conference. Overton, Texas. 8:00 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. Cost: \$30 (includes lunch). 5 CEUS.
- February 8<sup>th</sup> - Horse Nutrition Clinic and Dinner. 4-6 p.m. Senior Citizens Center – Athens . Dinner will be served. Free to the public. Reserve your spot by calling Paula Odom at 903-681-6103.
- February 22<sup>nd</sup> - Virtual 4-H Youth Bass Tournament. \$25 to join 4-H and a one-time fee of \$10 for all spring fishing events. Questions contact Brock Fry 903-665-2421 or visit our website [henderson.agrilife.org](http://henderson.agrilife.org).
- February 25th-26th - East Texas Beef Cattle Shortcourse. 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Corazon-Pitchford Sale Facility, Athens. Day 1 \$15, Day 2 \$40, Both days \$45. Breakfast and lunch will be served. 1 CEU offered for Day 1. Register by February 18th. For more info call 903-675-6130

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