

CropLinks

information on forages, corn and cereals

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September Weed Control in Grass Hayfields

Last year in a September issue of CropLinks, we talked about cleaning up GRASS only hayfields with 2, 4-D Amine. Having 20 acres of grass hay myself, I thought it about time that I did just that. In late September a 1 litre/acre application of 2, 4-D Amine 600 was used at a product cost of \$10 per acre. The 2, 4-D Amine did an excellent job in cleaning up the dandelion, wild carrot, plantain and some other weeds. A mid-September to early October application is the best time to control these broadleaf-tap rooted weeds when 'nutrients' are being pulled into the root system for overwintering. This treatment cannot be used on fields that have alfalfa or clovers which would be seriously injured or killed (there are no herbicide options for dandelion or curl dock control in alfalfa or clover-grass fields).

Staffing Changes at Perennia

Bill Thomas finished up with Perennia at the end of July. Bill has served Nova Scotia farmers very well in forages and grain crops for over 30 years with both the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Perennia. He has been a trusted extension advisor, respected researcher and a good friend to many of us. Bill has helped improve forage quality, soil nutrient understanding and crop yields over his career. I've worked with Bill over this entire time and we've conferred frequently to ensure our recommendations are providing NS growers with the best solution/information. Thanks Bill for all your agronomy contributions and dedicated service.

We welcome Sonny Murray to Perennia starting on September 18th as the Provincial Field Crops Specialist. Many of you know Sonny from over 15 years' consulting and sales experience with Scotian Gold in corn, soybean, cereals and forages. Sonny also has a great deal of experience working with Valley growers in cover crop mixtures, along with providing fertilizer and crop protection recommendations. There will be a six month overlap with Sonny and myself (I'll be retiring April 1st).

During this time, Sonny will be getting oriented to working in agronomy extension with Perennia on a province-wide basis. I'll help introduce him to many farmers in the Central and Eastern Nova Scotia areas that wouldn't already know him. Sonny will bring lots of experience and energy to this position.

Less Optimism for Winter Wheat in 2018??

The NS winter wheat yields are quite impressive with many fields coming off around 2.3-2.5 tonnes per acre. There are fusarium kernels in some truckloads, but not enough usually to drop grade or be a feeding concern. The two 'kickers' however are low price (\$188-195/tonne now) and too much local winter wheat and PEI spring wheat from last year that is still in storage. Excess wheat in storage that doesn't move from the commercial storages to the feed mills by early October will inhibit storage capacity for the bigger volumes of soybeans and corn. In speaking with a grain center operator last week, he commented that we may need to back off intended winter wheat planting acreage and perhaps move towards a higher amount of forward contracting on corn-soybeans-wheat before these crops are planted.

Antigonish County Calcitic Limestone

Many of the growers I work with are not needing dolomitic lime where their soil test magnesium levels are 700-900 kg/ha. These growers do require calcitic lime, however to supply calcium and keep soil pH up in the 6.3-6.6 range. Mosher's Lime in Upper Musquodoboit had very little calcitic lime in 2016 and none available in 2017. The closest calcitic only-lime source for most NS growers is the Antigonish County quarry. Here's a chemical and fineness (particle) analyses on the Antigonish calcitic compared to Mosher's calcitic lime.

Calcitic Lime Specs	Antigonish Calcitic Lime	Mosher's Calcitic Lime
Calcium %	31.9	27.5
Magnesium %	0.2	4.8
Neutralizing Value	81.7	83.3
Fineness Rating	60.0	80.4

The summary table represents the average of four loads of Antigonish lime from the past few months, and the Mosher's calcitic lime results were from two analyses only in 2014. You can see the Antigonish calcitic lime does not have as much fineness as the Mosher's lime. I'm not concerned about this because the actual sieving results show very little difference in the amount of coarser particles that remained on top of the largest mesh opening screen (10 mesh). For the Antigonish lime there was 7-10% of the lime by weight that didn't go through the largest 10 mesh screen (which has 1.65mm or less than 1/10 inch openings), compared to 1-5% coarser particles in the Mosher's lime. This simply means the Antigonish limestone could take slightly longer for it all to dissolve in the soil. Not a big deal where you're getting a liming product that is 32% calcium and priced at \$30 per ton. The NSDA programs office does pay subsidy on the extra trucking distance into Central and Western Nova Scotia areas where this Antigonish lime is the closest calcitic source. Either you or your trucker can contact Antigonish Limestone Ltd. at 902-870-4501(days), 902-863-5027(nights) or email: bernie_landry@hotmail.com. Mosher's in Upper Musquodoboit still has a good supply of dolomitic limestone that contains high amounts of both calcium and magnesium.

Seedbed Prep for Forages

There have been more requests to check out forage seeding failures or partial establishments this summer, than perhaps any prior year. Some of these same growers were more successful in their forage seeding last year which had a considerably drier May-August. What caused the 2017 forage seeding failures? Most of the problems are either due to inadequate soil-seed contact (not a smooth and firm enough surface) and lack of timely rains to keep enough moisture in the upper 1/2 inch of soil. Forages need a much finer and smoother seedbed surface than corn, soybean, or cereals that are 'drilled' deeper into the soil and have the seed trench pressed firmly around the seed with a packing wheel.

The challenges in forage re-seeding tend to be more on both ends of the soil textural range. Both sandy soils and clay-loam soils can be trickier to re-seed than medium textured, fairly well drained loamy soils. The recipe for forage establishment success on the sandy soils is not having any previous crop or manure bedding residue on the surface. Use a land-leveler if possible after tillage to produce a very smooth and firm 'table top' surface to the field. If the soil surface is not fairly flat then it's very hard to get really good soil to seed contact (pre-roll perhaps if you don't have a land leveler). Then seed as early in spring as possible, roll well at seeding and hope for frequent rainfall for the first 4-6 weeks. I'm not a big fan of using any nurse crop on sandy soils where it creates more competition for soil moisture, but if the field is hilly enough to be erodible then 50 lbs/acre of barley or oats are perhaps a necessity.

On the heavier clay-loam soils, I think your forage re-seeding success starts in the fall with proper herbicide burn off (if needed) and moldboard plowing. In the spring you need to wait for enough soil drying so you can work up a seedbed properly and not create a lumpy surface. If the soil is not too rocky, then land level if possible and seed as early as conditions allow (in some clay soils this may be June-August).

Regardless of your soil type, forage seeding success is all about creating a fine-firm-extremely smooth soil surface that **provides maximum soil to seed contact**.