



Forage Management

Edward B. Rayburn, Ph.D.
Extension Forage Agronomist

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No-Till Seedings

The following is a summary of management considerations needed in establishing a no-till seeding. These points can be used as a checklist for successful seedings. For more detailed information, check the noted TRIM fact sheets, available through the WVU Extension Service.

Correct Soil Fertility and pH

Soil test and apply the proper rates of phosphorus, potassium, and lime to meet the needs of the new seeding. For spring seedings, fertilizer and lime should be applied the previous year since it is difficult to get lime trucks out on wet fields in the spring (TRIM FS 3201, 3212, 5202).

Select the Forage Species for the Soil and Management to be Used

Select the mixture of species best adapted to the soil drainage and management to be used in the field. Improperly matching the plants to the soil and management will result in the untimely death of the seeding (TRIM FS 5302, 5304).

Control Plant Competition

There are two types of competition to a no-till seeding: perennial weeds and desirable forage grasses. For a no-till seeding, perennial weeds should be identified and killed with the appropriate herbicides long enough before the new seeding to meet herbicide label restrictions. Save desirable forage grasses by using a burn-down herbicide, which will reduce their competition but not kill them. You can kill undesirable forage grasses approved systemic herbicides.

Seed at Proper Rate and Depth, Maintaining Good Seed-Soil Contact

Use "blue-label" certified seed of proven varieties to ensure clean seed with known performance. Seed at the proper rate and depth. It is critical that the no-till seeder be adjusted properly. Adjust the disk openers so that cool-season grasses and legumes are seeded $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep. Adjust the press wheel for adequate pressure to ensure proper firming of the soil to get good seed-soil contact (TRIM FS 5302).

Manage Grazing and Mechanical Harvest to Maintain the Desired Plant Species

The main reason no-till seedings are lost is that they are not grazed or harvested properly after establishment. Graze or harvest the field at the appropriate timing and intensity for the forage mixture seeded. Remember that before renovation, a pasture is in balance with the soil fertility and grazing management used. Without changing the grazing or fertility management, a new seeding will only revert back to what was there before (TRIM FS 5004, 5710).

Manage Soil Fertility to Maintain Forage Production

To maintain forage production, apply fertilizers to replace the plant nutrients removed in the harvested forage. These fertilizers can be home-grown manure or purchased fertilizers and lime (TRIM FS 5202).