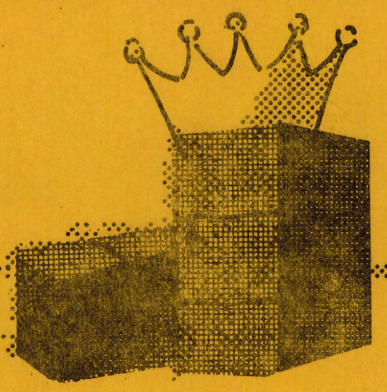
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Forage Queen



January 7, 1975

Management and Seeding of Alfalfa Hay
Importance of Winter and Spring Irrigation
Planting Depths and Seeding Rates

Management and Seeding of Alfalfa Hay

Hay growers and seedsmen should mark their calendars now for two meetings in February to be held in Kerman and Riverdale.

When: Wednesday, February 5th
Time: 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Where: Portuguese Hall, Kerman
14910 West C Street

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When: Thursday, February 6th
Time: 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Where: Riverdale Memorial Building

This is a repeat of the same program at the Memorial Building in Riverdale on Mt. Whitney Avenue across from the High School.

Topics will include:

Control & Management of Alfalfa Weevil -
Dr. Charles Summers, Entomologist, University of California, San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Research and Extension Center

Buying & Selling Alfalfa Hay on the Basis of a Chemical Analysis -
Dr. Don Bath, Extension Dairy Specialist, University of California, Davis

How Cutting Schedules Affect Yield, Quality and Stand Life -
Dr. Vern Marble, Extension Agronomist, University of California, Davis

Influence of Wheel Traffic on Alfalfa Yields and Stand Longevity -
Bob Sheesley, Farm Advisor, Cooperative Extension, Fresno County

Weed Control in Alfalfa Hay -
Bill Fischer, Farm Advisor, Cooperative Extension, Fresno County

These meetings will have plenty of time for questions and answers. Plan to bring your foremen and any personnel who you wish to be exposed to alfalfa hay management and seeding information.

Importance of Winter & Spring Irrigation

A major limiting factor for alfalfa hay yields in Fresno County is the available water to the plant during the growing season. Winter and spring irrigations can assist growers in furnishing water to their alfalfa plants during the hot summer months. This is particularly true of stands one year or older on loam or clay loam soils. These finer textured soils have the ability to hold more water in the root zone than do sandy soils. Growers should irrigate during the winter and spring months so that the entire root zone will be filled to field capacity before March.

The University of California's Agricultural Extension programs are available to all, without regard to race, color, or national origin.

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Co-operative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture, University of California, and Fresno County Co-operating

During the warm summer months, it is not possible to replenish deep moisture in our fine textured soils without losing the alfalfa stand to "scald". Now is the time to dig down and find out how deep your plant root systems are, and schedule irrigations to fill this root zone. Roots will not grow into dry soil, therefore, winter and spring irrigations should be applied at depths a little beyond the existing root area if you want to encourage root growth.

Planting Depths and Seeding Rates

A planting rate of 20 pounds of alfalfa seed per acre is recommended in fall and spring plantings of alfalfa where a good seedbed has been prepared. Field experiments have not shown any advantages of heavier seeding rates under these conditions.

Adverse planting conditions such as cloddy seedbeds, cold weather, improper planting equipment, and dry soil are cause enough for planting more seed per acre. Planting depth is one of the most critical factors involved in establishing an alfalfa stand.

Less than two percent of the seed planted below two inches deep will emerge after germinating. At the one-inch planting depth, about half of the seed will emerge; and from the ¼ to ½ inch depths, roughly 60 to 70 percent plant emergence will result, given adequate soil moisture. This indicates the importance of placing seed into soil moisture at depths not greater than one inch and preferably between ¼ to ½ inch deep.

Moisture must be retained around the planted seed for it to germinate and enable the young root to get established in the top soil. A ring roller can be used following a broadcast seeding operation to help provide a shallow soil cover over the seed and to firm the seedbed for better moisture retention near the soil surface.

If a harrow is used to cover seed, it is usually helpful to follow with a ring roller to firm the seedbed. The harrow is not an accurate tool for placing seed at shallow depths. It will mix seed into the top three inches of soil, causing a loss of some of the planted seed.

Sincerely,

Bob Sheesley

Bob Sheesley
Farm Advisor

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