

The Forager

Spring 2012

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Justin Rowe Named 2011 IFGC Livestock/Forage Producer

Justin Rowe was nominated by Madison County NRCS. Justin, Corrine and their son, Charlie, live in Dallas County and also have pasture in Madison County. Justin has converted his pastures into a rotational grazing system.

A variety of management activities and improvements have been used in the development of the system. Soil test are used to make nutrient management decisions. A tree shear has been used to remove undesirable trees and stream crossings have been installed to improve water quality and protect the health of the cattle. Water lines and tanks have been installed to bring the water to the livestock which improves forage utilization.

Justin also utilizes rotational grazing to strip graze corn residue. In addition he has also seeded rye, turnips and radishes after harvesting corn silage. This provides excellent fall feed and gives ground cover to protect the soil.

Justin attends many educational events to gather new information. He has also participated in several educational events as a speaker.

Thank you, Justin, for your efforts to improve rotational grazing in Iowa. IFGC enjoys the opportunity to recognize producers such as Justin with the IFGC Livestock/Forage Producer Award.



Justin & Corrine Rowe receiving the 2011 IFGC Livestock/Forage Producer Award from President Abels.

IFGC Education Grant Program

Written by: Mark Fehseke, Iowa Forage & Grassland Education Committee

Your IFGC education committee continues to fund the education grants program in 2012. This program is designed to assist with funding forage education activities in Iowa. A common use of the education grant program is helping fund refreshments at pasture walks and field days. Many other sponsors will not fund these items. IFGC, however, may fill in this needed area. The IFGC education grant program typically funds a dozen or more projects each year in as many counties. Hundreds of people attend these IFGC sponsored events each year.

The applicant or applicant's organization must be a member of IFGC to be eligible. The applicant must be approved for funding prior to the event. They must agree to recognize IFGC as one of the sponsors of their event and distribute IFGC membership applications to their audience. Approved events may submit bills for reimbursement up to a maximum of \$100 per event.

If you have a forage-based educational event coming up this year and need funding assistance, please consider your IFGC as a sponsor and apply for an IFGC Education Grant. For a copy of the application, contact your local ISU Extension or NRCS office. You can also contact Mark Fehseke for an application at 641-872-2259, dibbikim@yahoo.com or 418 S Franklin, Corydon, Iowa 50060.

Why Grass Your Alfalfa?

Written by: Luke Wilson, Iowa Forage & Grassland Council Board Member

Getting the most out of every acre is a common saying when discussing row crops. Why is this term not used as often in our hay acres?

As we move forward into a time of decreased hay acres and increased row crop, we have to have efficiency on our mind. Adding grass to your alfalfa is one way of doing that. Whether you are interseeding into an existing stand or a new seeding, grass is going to improve the efficiency of your alfalfa acres for the following reasons.

Improved overall Forage Yields: Research conducted by Barenbrug and the University of Minnesota found that adding certain grasses to your alfalfa increased DM Yields up to 22% without N fertilizer and up to 37% were N fertilizer was applied.

Complementary to each other: When selecting a grass to mix with your alfalfa be sure to select improved varieties with heading dates similar to mid-bloom dates on your alfalfa. You are commonly looking for grasses that are around the 140 Julian days to maturity to mix with alfalfa's mid-bloom of 143 Julian days.

Fill in the weak spots: Grass will do better than alfalfa in poor drained soil, low lying areas and soils with low ph. In problem areas where the alfalfa would not take you are now getting production towards overall yield.

Improves the overwintering of alfalfa and stand longevity: Grass helps provide protection to alfalfa plants over the winter months resulting in less winter kill of alfalfa.

Improved Drying time: Grass will reduce the dry down time needed in alfalfa to make optimal dry hay.

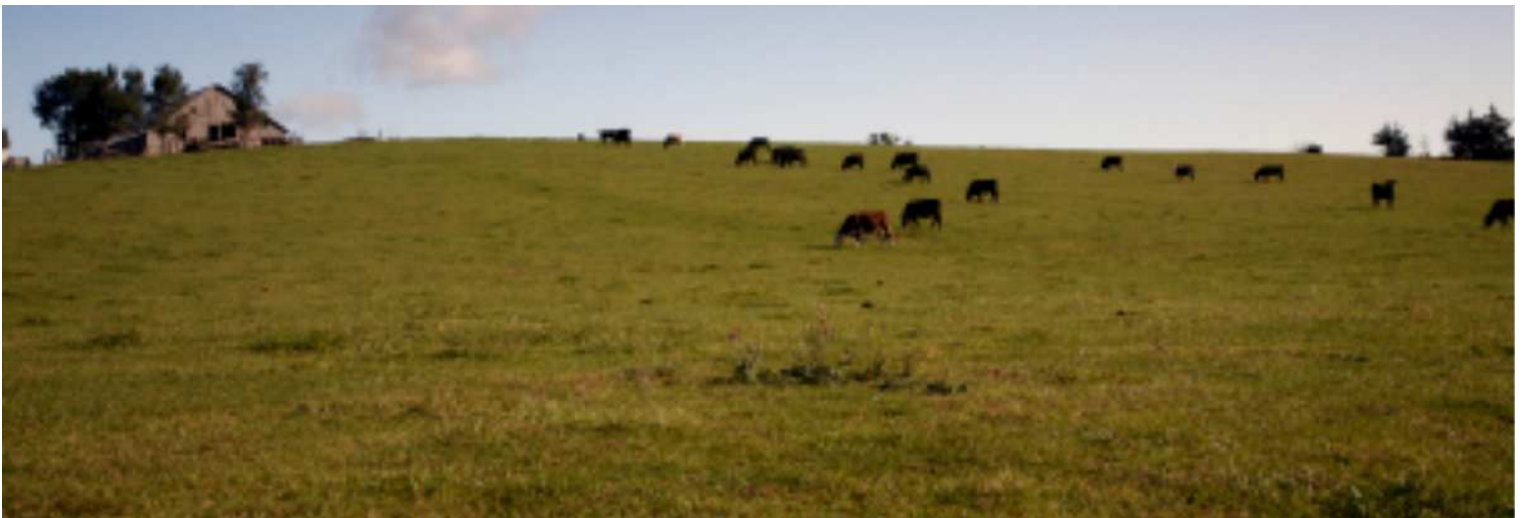
Manure utilization: Having grass with your alfalfa will allow you to spread liquid manure after each cutting throughout the summer.

Better NDF Digestibility: Digestible fiber of high quality grasses will help alleviate acidosis in high producing dairy herds.

The benefits of having grass with your alfalfa are great, but there are also management decisions that will increase the success of this concept. One of the more important decisions is the selection of which grass to use. Make sure to use a grass whether it is tall fescue, Orchardgrass or timothy that has a heading date similar to the mid-bloom of your alfalfa. This way you are able to harvest both plants at the optimal harvest time and get the highest quality feeds from both species.

When establishing a stand of grass, drilling is recommended to ensure a good soil to seed contact. If you must use a nurse crop or you put grass into an existing stand remove the cover in a timely manner so they do not shade out the new grass and hurt it.

Once you have your alfalfa/grass field up and going the last management tool that you can use will improve the productivity and persistence of your field. That is setting your cutting height at 3.5 inches. A rule of thumb is when cutting grass you should be able to see green where you have cut. By doing this you are not damaging the grass's crown and giving it more rapid re-growth resulting in higher yields and a longer lasting hay field.



Evaluating Alfalfa Stands for Winter Injury

Written by: **Stephen K. Barnhart, Extension Forage Specialist, Iowa State University**

Email: sbarnhar@iastate.edu

Stand Evaluation

When evaluating winter injury, consider both the number of plants per square foot, and for alfalfa, the age of the stand. Crown and root diseases also have a major effect on stand reduction of legumes, so plants should be checked for dead, dying, or diseased tissue. Winter-injured plants are often slow to recover in spring, so a quick decision to destroy a winter injured stand is not recommended.

Wait until the spring re-growth is about 3 to 4 inches high. Select random stand count sites. Check at least one 1-square-foot site for every 5 to 10 acres. Dig up all of the plants in the 1-square-foot area. Pick at the crown and buds with a knife to determine if the tissue is still alive. Then count the number of live plants per square foot. Use Table 1 to begin your rating of the stand. Next, split the taproots and evaluate their general health. The core of healthy taproots are firm and creamy-white. Damaged or dying taproots are yellowish-brown to chocolate-brown in color and watery or dry and fibrous in texture. Only healthy plants will contribute significantly to yield, so if any of the taproots are more than 50 percent diseased, reduce your initial stand count accordingly.

Table 1 Age of stand and rating of winter survival

	<u>Good</u>	<u>Marginal*</u>	<u>Consider Reseeding</u>
		Plants per square foot	
Year after seeding	+12	8 to 12	less than 8
2	+8	5 to 6	less than 5
3**	+6	4 to 5	less than 4
4 and older **	+4	3 to 4	less than 3

* Alfalfa plants in thin stands often produce more individual stems per plant and compensate some in yield potential

** If 50 percent or more of the plants have crown or root rot, consider reseeding.

Plan your management this season, based on your stand evaluation.

- If stands are winter-injured, but will be harvested this season, allow plants to mature to 10 to 25% bloom or later, before cutting.
- Increase cutting height to 3 to 4 inches
- Maintain good fertilizer and insect management
- If stands are severely winter injured, and you have incurred a significant loss to planned stored forage, plan to reestablish a new hay field this spring, and begin to plan for any needed supplemental harvested and stored forage needed until the new seeding becomes adequately productive.
- Reseeding in hayfields or pastures might be a viable option. **Reseeding more alfalfa into or immediately after a 2-year old or older stand is not recommended.** Overseeding or drilling grasses or red clover into thin or winter damaged stands should be done from now through April. Delaying seeding later increases the risk of plant competition and seedling loss to increasingly dry and hot soil surface conditions of early summer.

Read the following Iowa State University Extension Publications for further information

Evaluation for winter injury <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1362.pdf>

Selecting forage species <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1792.pdf>

Establishing new forage stands <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1008.pdf>

Interseeding and No-till renovation <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1097.pdf>



Iowa Forage & Grassland Council
900 Des Moines Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

Join the ***American Forage and Grassland Council*** for the very best in education and networking. You'll hear and see relevant presentations delivered by on-the-ground practitioners. From the beginning of the tour to the end, you'll find activities and information designed to help you merge environment and economics, while re-inventing green with forages.

Highlights

- Tour stops at successful operations with hands on presentations
- The AFGC National Hay Contest
- Networking opportunities designed to keep you connected with your peers
- Cool Season Workshop on May 16, 2012

The 2012 AFGC Annual Tour will bring producers, scientists and forage industry professionals together from across the United States and Canada. Attendees will learn about the benefits of managed grazing systems, improved forage production systems, increased profitability, and more.

1st Annual AFGC National Tour

**“Re-Inventing Green with
Forages—Merging
Environment &
Economics”**

May 17-18, 2012
Embassy Suites
Rogers, Arkansas

Hosted by the
**Arkansas Forage &
Grassland Council**

Register Online at
www.fgc.com