



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



# The Forager

Summer 2012

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## USDA Announces Streamlined Disaster Designation Process



USDA has announced a package of program changes in an effort to deliver faster and more flexible assistance to farmers and ranchers devastated by natural disasters. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced three significant changes to decades-old USDA programs and processes related to Secretarial disaster designations: a final rule that simplifies the process for Secretarial disaster designations and should result in a 40 percent reduction in processing time for most counties affected by disasters; a reduced interest rate for emergency loans that effectively lowers the current rate from 3.75 percent to 2.25 percent; and a payment reduction on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands qualified for emergency haying and grazing in 2012, from 25 to 10 percent.

"Agriculture remains a bright spot in our nation's economy and it is increasingly important that USDA has the tools to act quickly and deliver assistance to farmers and ranchers when they need it most," said Vilsack.

A natural disaster designation makes all qualified farm operators in the designated areas eligible for low interest emergency loans. The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to designate disaster counties to make disaster assistance programs available to farmers and ranchers. Previous to these changes, the process had been in place for more than two decades and regulations had not been substantively revised since 1988.

## IFGC Forage Awards

Forages are very important for Iowa. They are important to Iowa's economy, protect the soil from erosion, improve water quality, and provide wildlife habitat. Forages are used for grazing animals and for hay production. But, most of these producers "fly under the radar" when it comes to being recognized for their contributions to Iowa Agriculture. The Iowa Forage and Grassland Council (IFGC) will recognize these producers at their annual meeting in November. At least one award is presented to a producer that does an outstanding job of hay production and another to at least one producer that does an excellent job of rotational grazing their pasture.

IFGC needs you to nominate a friend or neighbor that can fit into one of these two categories. The nomination forms are attached or are available on the IFGC website at <http://iowaforage.org/>. Eight or ten digital pictures will be needed from you to help describe their system and to be used in a power point presentation at the awards ceremony. **Nominations need to be returned to Bert Strayer by September 28, 2012.** For more information contact IFGC President Bert Strayer at DSM Forage & Turf Seed; 2302 SE Creekview Dr-Ste 6; Ankeny, Iowa 50021 telephone 515-965-4425 or Director Brian Peterson at [bckapeterson@gmail.com](mailto:bckapeterson@gmail.com) phone 641-344-1026

## Seed Money for Forage Events

Iowa Forage and Grassland Council is offering education grants to members holding forage events in 2012. IFGC can help offset costs for refreshments, mailings, speaker fees, and other associated costs. Applications up to \$100 will be considered.

Send applications to:

Mark Fehseke  
IFGC Education Chair  
[dibbikim@yahoo.com](mailto:dibbikim@yahoo.com)

Haven't got an application? Contact Mark!

## Options for Forage Plantings After Drought

Ensure past herbicides don't impact future plantings. Conceived seed will protect sorghum seed from grass herbicides. Forage sorghums are a great substitute for corn silage. Good energy, good ADF/NDF, and about 4-5 DM ton can be expected. Use sorghum x sudangrass for multiple cuttings (ensile, bale, chop). Teff and pearl millet work well baled or grazed late (expect 2 DM tons). Forage soybeans are a possibility, too. Nitrogen management and adequate moisture are required for the success of these crops.

Cover crops may also provide fall forage. Oats & annual ryegrass can be planted late July/August for tonnage (2-3 DM tons). Rye grain and triticale will produce harvestable forage this fall with additional growth in the spring. Brassicas like turnips and radishes recycle nutrients, reduce compaction, and promote weed and disease suppression. Again, nitrogen management and adequate moisture are required for the success of these crops.

## SAVE THE DATE!

IFGC Annual Convention

November 20-21, 2012



## Iowa DOT Reminder on Process for Legal Harvesting of Grass in State Highway Right of Way

Can the grass within the right of way of state-maintained highways be legally harvested for livestock feed? Yes, during certain periods of the year and with a permit issued by the Iowa Department of Transportation. Grazing is not permitted. Permits are required to access or perform any type of work within the state highway right of way.

Persons interested in applying for a permit should contact the Iowa DOT. Not all highway right of way may be mowed; and annual permits may have already been issued for some areas. Iowa DOT staff will be able to help identify available areas.

Iowa law prohibits mowing of roadside vegetation on the right of way or medians of any primary highway, interstate highway or secondary road **prior to July 15**, except:

- Within 200 yards of an inhabited dwelling.
- On right of way within one mile of the corporate limits of a city.
- To promote native species of vegetation or other long-lived and adaptable vegetation.
- To establish control of damaging insect populations, noxious weeds and invasive plant species.
- For visibility and safety reasons.
- Within rest areas, weigh stations and wayside parks.
- Within 50 feet of a drainage tile or tile intake.
- For access to a mailbox or for other accessibility purposes.
- On right of way adjacent to agricultural demonstration or research plots.

The Iowa DOT has established two periods for harvesting grass within the state-maintained highway right of way.

- **July 15-Sept. 1:** For cool-season grasses and forage legumes (e.g., smooth brome, tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, alfalfa, bird's-foot trefoil)
- **July 15-Aug. 15:** For areas containing warm-season native grasses (e.g., switchgrass, big bluestem, little bluestem, Indiangrass, sideoats grama, Canada wildrye)

The Iowa DOT may restrict operations or define additional stipulations in the permit, including those that affect the health of vegetation. Mowing of nurse crop or newly seeded areas that are not yet fully established will not be permitted. (It can take four to five years following seeding for an area to become fully established.)

All work shall be performed between 30 minutes after sunrise and 30 minutes before sunset. Work that is performed between the road and ditch bottom requires traffic control. All personnel must wear approved safety apparel, which the Iowa DOT will provide for the applicant when the permit is approved.

The Iowa DOT makes no guarantee as to the quality and quantity of the grasses, or presence of any toxic materials or other contaminants. Applicants should check with the local Iowa DOT maintenance facility for herbicide application records. Iowa DOT Form 810050 – Harvesting and Mowing Permit Application – is available from Iowa DOT representatives or online at <https://forms.iowadot.gov/FormsMgt/External/810050.pdf>. The application covers three types of operations: (1) mowing only; (2) harvesting hay in large or small bales; or (3) harvesting plant material other than hay with machinery, by hand or with hand tools.

Visit [www.iowadot.gov/maintenance/mowing.html](http://www.iowadot.gov/maintenance/mowing.html) to find the Iowa DOT representative serving the area nearest where you would like to harvest grass in order to receive assistance in processing your permit application.

## Late Summer Seeding of Forage Crops

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Late summer can be an excellent time to establish forage crops, provided there is sufficient moisture for germination and good seedling growth. It is also a good time to seed in bare or thin spots in forage stands established this spring. The following steps will improve the chances for successful forage stand establishment in late summer.

### 1. Plan-Ahead Steps:

- Test soils and apply needed, corrective lime and/or fertilizer during previous cropping seasons; corrective fertilizer can be incorporated during forage seedbed preparation.
- Begin to control problem perennial weeds a year or more ahead of seeding.
- Be careful with herbicide selection in crops grown in the field before the forage seeding because some may have residual soil activity and will harm new forage seedlings if proper waiting periods are not observed. Read the labels for details.

### 2. This is late-summer seeding, not fall seeding!

Seedlings require about 6 to 8 weeks of growth after emergence to have adequate vigor to survive the winter. Seed forage legumes such as red clover and alfalfa by August 10 in the northern third of Iowa, by August 20 in central parts of the state, and by September 1 in southern Iowa, **IF** – a big if !! - seedbed moisture is present at the time of seeding, **and** there is a likelihood of average or better rainfall for the remainder of the fall. There is a higher risk of seedling failure when planting seeds into dry soil, as there may be just enough moisture to germinate the seed but not enough for seedling establishment. Slow establishing species like birdsfoot trefoil or reed canarygrass should be planted in early August. Most forage grasses such as KY bluegrass, smooth brome, orchardgrass, tall fescue, and timothy can actually be seeded a week to two weeks later than the dates listed above. Don't plant warm-season prairie grasses as a late-summer seeding. Planting later than the dates mentioned above is sometimes successful, depending on fall and winter weather patterns, but there is increased risk of seeding failure and reduced future yield potential if planting is delayed.

### 3. Prepare a firm seedbed if using tillage.

Loose seedbeds dry out very quickly. Deep tillage should be completed several weeks ahead of seeding so rains can settle the soil before final seedbed preparation. A cultipacker or roller is an excellent last-pass tillage tool. The soil should be firm enough for a footprint to sink no deeper than 3/8 to 1/2 inch.

### 4. Don't plant alfalfa immediately after older established alfalfa.

Autotoxic compounds are released by old alfalfa plants that inhibit growth and productivity of new alfalfa seedlings. It is best to rotate to another crop for a year or more before going back to alfalfa; however, thickening up seedlings within 12 to 15 months of the original planting date considered to be a low-risk practice because autotoxicity concerns are greatest with older alfalfa fields.

### 5. Use high quality seed of known varieties.

Cheap seed often results in big disappointments and shorter stand life. Make sure legume seed has fresh inoculum of the proper rhizobium.

### 6. Plant seed shallow and in firm contact with the soil.

Carefully check seeding depth, especially when no-tilling. Drills with press wheels usually provide the greatest success in the summer. Broadcasting seed on the surface without good soil coverage and without firm packing is usually a recipe for failure in the summer.

### 7. Late-summer pasture interseeding and no-till forage seeding is an excellent way to conserve moisture, provided weeds are controlled prior to seeding.

Remove all straw after small grain harvest. Any remaining stubble should either be left standing, or clipped and removed. Do not leave clipped stubble in fields as it forms a dense mat that prevents good emergence.

### 8. Do not harvest or graze the new summer seedlings this fall.