April 2014

CC9 Emergency Pasture and Hay Crops

J. C. Swinbank

John Furrer

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EMERGENCY PASTURE AND HAY CROPS

J. C. Swinbank and John Furrer
Extension Agronomists

There is no best emergency forage crop which is suitable for all conditions. The following suggestions may be helpful to those who foresee a shortage of forage on their farms during the present or near

Pasture Crops

Small grain and Legume Mixtures

Oats, seeded alone, will give a lot of pasture at a low cost but for only a short period of time. The addition of sweet clover or red clover will, under favorable conditions, extend the grazing season throughout most of the summer.

A simple mixture is 3 bushels of oats and 7 to 10 pounds of sweet clover or red clover. This mixture can usually be seeded up to May 15 or June 1, with satisfactory results. Adding 8 to 10 pounds of rye-grass per acre may be advantageous under some conditions.

Grazing should not be permitted until the oats has tillered well. This generally, will be when the plants are 6 to 8 inches in height.

Other spring sown small grains could be substituted for the oats if necessary.

Sudan Grass

Seedings made between May 15, and June 15, are the most productive. However, later seedings often give excellent yields. Plant 20 to 25 pounds of seed per acre. Seed about one inch in depth. Packing after seeding hastens germination and may improve the stand.
Delay pasturing sudan until it has reached a height of one foot or more.

The following table gives the relative amounts of hydrocyanic acid (the cause of prussic acid poisoning of livestock) for the three varieties commonly sold in the state:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>HCN Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piper</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheeler</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Sweet</td>
<td>139.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rape

Rape is an excellent pasture crop. It is especially popular as a hog pasture, but, it is also grazed readily by cattle and sheep.

Rape may be seeded as early as conditions permit or until mid-summer. It is commonly planted with small grain. Plant 4 to 6 pounds per acre at a depth of about one-half inch. The Dwarf Essex variety is recommended.

Maximum returns are realized from rape when it is permitted to make a growth of 10 to 12 inches before grazing is started. When rape pasture is used for dairy cattle it should be used immediately after milking rather than before milking to prevent the milk being flavored.

Winter rye

When it is too late in the season to plant other temporary pasture or feed crops, winter rye may be seeded for fall pasture. The rye can be carried over for early spring pasture the following year. Under exceptional conditions this crop may have a place. Seed rye for pasture at the rate of 1 1/2 bushels per acre.

*Two year average on fall growth when plants were 4 to 6 inches tall.
Emergency Hay and Fodder Crops

Sudan grass

The planting of sudan for hay is essentially the same as for pasture.

Average yields of sudan for hay at Ames, Iowa, during a four year period are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Planting</th>
<th>Yield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 7</td>
<td>4 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 21</td>
<td>3 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 5</td>
<td>2.6 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 19</td>
<td>1.8 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 26</td>
<td>1.3 tons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Soybeans

Soybean hay yields vary from 1.5 to 2.5 tons per acre depending upon soil, rainfall, and variety. Beans seeded May 25 to June 7 are ready for hay harvest by late August and early September. It is very important to kill as many weeds as possible before seeding the soybeans, as weed competition is often a serious problem. Standard recommended soybean varieties should be needed.

Soybean - Sudan grass Combination

Soybeans and sudan grass seeded together make an excellent forage. A combination of this sort aids in solving the weed and erosion problems which exist when soybeans are seeded alone and provides a higher quality forage than sudan grass alone.

When the two are seeded together, soybeans tend to predominate in early May seedings and sudan grass predominates when the seeding is made later. If seedings are to be made in June or July, it is suggested that soybeans should be seeded about 10 days before the sudan grass. The sudan may be covered with a weeder, rotary hoe or harrow. A mixture of 1 to 2 bushels of soybeans and 5 pounds of sudan grass per acre is suggested.
Sorghum

Forage sorghum will give a large yield of palatable, nutritious forage. For late planting the earlier maturing varieties such as Black Amber, Fremont, Norkan, Leoti, Rox Orange, and Early Sumac are suggested.

For fodder production plant in rows using about 12 pounds of seed per acre; if broadcast, seed at least 5 pounds of seed per acre.

Millet

There are several varieties of millet, all suited for seeding as late as July 15. White Wonder and German are the most popular varieties. Drill 30 to 40 pounds of seed per acre at a depth of about 1/2 to 1 inch. The seedbed is prepared as for small grain. Most varieties of millet, if seeded before July 15, may be expected to mature a crop of seed. German millet, a more productive but coarser growing later maturing variety, should not be seeded after July 1, for a full crop. Pros or "hog" millet also called "Hershey" is a grain type and is unsuited for hay in eastern Nebraska.