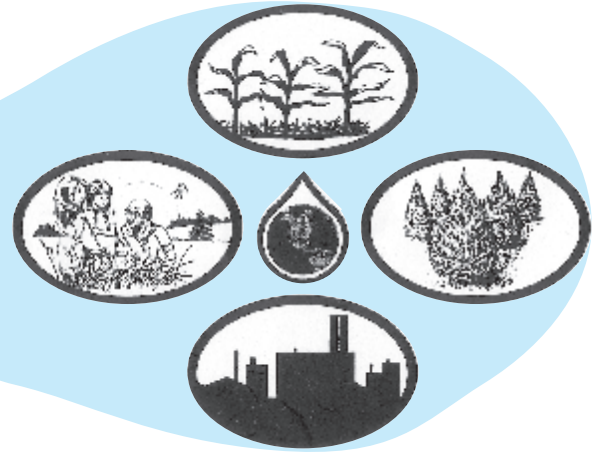




St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

May/June 2013
Volume 15, Issue 3

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What's Going On...

*Events hosted by the St. Joseph County SWCD
& Our Partners in Conservation*

MAY

20 - (Mon) **SWCD Monthly Board Mtg.**, Centre Twp. Library, 7PM

20—General CRP sign-up opens

27 - Memorial Day—Office Closed

JUNE

3 - FSA's ACRE Program Sign-up Deadline

4 - Tentative SWCD Quarterly Supervisors Meeting (Time/Location TBD)

14—CRP General Sign-up Closes

15 - Acreage Certification Due to FSA office

17 - (Mon) **SWCD Monthly Board Mtg.**, Centre Twp. Library, 7PM

28—Start of the St. Joseph County 4-H Fair

Have You Heard? ... FSA Sign-up Deadlines are Quickly Approaching

FSA Deadlines

DCP/ACRE

The deadline to enroll in the ACRE program is June 3, 2013. Producers who were previously enrolled may elect to participate in either DCP or ACRE. The enrollment deadline for DCP is August 2, 2013.

Certification

The Deadline for acreage certification is July 15, 2013. Please contact this office upon (planting) completion in order to finalize your report of commodities (FSA-578's)

General CRP

On February 16, 2013, the Secretary announced that general CRP sign-up 45 will be held from May 20, 2013, through June 14, 2013. CRP participants with contracts expiring on September 30, 2013, or producers with land that is not currently enrolled in CRP, may submit offers. Accepted contracts for CRP sign-up 45 will become effective on October 1, 2013.

Farm Storage Facility Loans

Are you looking at expanding your grain storage facilities? If so the Farm Service Agency might be able to help! We offer Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL). Low interest loans are available for producers to purchase grain bins, handling equipment and other grain storage equipment. The seven year loans can be used not only for the purchase but construction of the equipment, including drying equipment and remodeling of existing facilities. The interest rate changes each month and will be applicable for the life of the loan. Loan installments are made annually over a period of 7 years. All farm storage facility loans are secured by a promissory note and security agreement. For loans exceeding \$50,000 or where a borrower's aggregate outstanding loan balance exceeds \$50,000 a lien on real estate will be required. The maximum amount that may be borrowed is 85% of the net cost of the equipment up to \$100,000 for each borrower. A minimum down payment of 15% is required.

Thank You!

River Bend Hose Specialty, Inc. - General Donation - 2013 GOLD MEMBER
Ehninger Farms, LLC - "Annual Meeting Donation" - 2013 BRONZE MEMBER



Spring Grazing Considerations

Adopted from the March NRCS Grazing Bites Publication

Authored by Victor Shelton, NRCS State Agronomist/Grazing Specialist

It is approaching the time of year that I really start getting antsy for any signs of spring. I start looking and watching for any new green growth emerging slowly from the browner leftovers of last year. I still find spring so amazing to watch as the quiet, blander looking winter gives way to a new season of color...which includes a lot of green. Speaking of green...what shade of green is your pasture going to be this spring?

There are several factors that will affect the nitrogen content and somewhat correspondingly the crude protein content of the new spring sward which include the amount of existing legumes, the amount of stored organic nitrogen in the soil, and certainly any nitrogen that has been added from commercial fertilizer or additional animal manure.

Legumes fix nitrogen with the help of *Rhizobia* bacteria species. As soon as the legume roots start growing in the spring and the root hairs start to multiply, the *Rhizobia* start to colonize and the legume nodules start to form. Inside the nodules, the bacteria continue to multiply and convert the N₂ from the soil air spaces to ammonium. Ladino type white clovers can add up to 200 pounds of nitrogen to a well managed healthy pasture. Each *Rhizobium* is species specific, thus the reason it takes specific inoculants when planting legumes.

Commercial fertilizer is always an option. Nutrients need to be kept in balance. Too high a level of potassium may result in grass tetany and milk fever problems. Too much nitrogen and you may get more growth than you can use at one time. Excessive nitrogen applied in the spring can put the hammer on the cool season legumes in mixes.

Most people will fertilize with nitrogen or a combination with nitrogen in the early spring. Not a problem if we want to cut it for hay, but for a pasture with cool season grasses such as orchard grass and fescue we are just adding fuel to the fire. **These cool season forages will normally produce two thirds of their total dry matter by mid June.** Fertilizing early promotes early growth that may be difficult to manage in a grazing system. We can take some of this excess growth off as hay, but we might be better off waiting until mid June and putting the first application of nitrogen on to help promote improved summer growth and then a second application in mid August to early September to promote the next growth spurt in the fall. This second application is perfect timing for fertilizing forages we aim to grow and stockpile for fall, winter or early spring use. Another possibility is to do multiple applications. This works well in a rotational grazing system where you apply a small portion of fertilizer to the paddock after each or every other grazing.

Been concerned about the effects of the drought on your pasture? Well don't panic just yet, first do a very good evaluation of the field. The plants might be brown on top, but hopefully the storage unit below is ready to rebound soon with warm spring conditions. Pull back those dead leaves, hopefully you have some left, and look at the plant base. You should be able to find some little growing points at the base and attached to some live roots. Now...make sure you are looking at one of your desired forages and not a weed. On a square foot basis, do you have good soil coverage? Is it with live (dormant) plants and desirable species? Are at least two of those plants a legume such as red or white clover? This is the first evaluation we need to do. This will provide us with an idea of what kind of growth we should expect even if we do nothing. Thin stands will of course indicate poorer yields.

Dig down into the roots if possible and look at the roots. Are they alive and healthy? The more live root mass, the better the early growth will be and it is a good indicator that the plant went dormant before being eaten too close or that you did a good job in maintaining some residual. So keep up the good grazing practices and enjoy the challenges of a new year!

If you have any questions, or for more information, regarding any of the issue covered in this article please contact the St. Joseph County SWCD's office at 574-936-2024 X 4!

Thank You!

The Famer's Exchange - General Donation- 2013 SILVER MEMBER



Low potassium fertilizers, bad for lawns, good for profits.

In 2007, when the price of fertilizers went through the roof, fertilizer manufacturers sought a way to maintain profits in a way that did not cause sticker shock to consumers. They did this by totally removing phosphorus and drastically reducing the amount of potassium. Removing phosphorus was good because most soils in Michiana naturally contain enough for lawns, as well as being the responsible environmental thing to do. Reduced amounts of potassium in fertilizers kept profits up for manufacturers, but has resulted in lawns that range from looking okay at times to lawns having poor color, poor draught tolerance, poor disease resistance, slow recovery from insect damage, and poor spring green up.

When you look at a bag of fertilizer you will commonly see three numbers, separated by dashes, which indicate amounts of fertilizer contained in the bags. Nitrogen, the first number on a bag of fertilizer, gets the most attention because it is the most abundant ingredient and has the quickest, most noticeable response on the plant. Phosphorus is the second number on a bag and is a "0" most often. Potassium, the last number, is the silent workhorse in a grass plant. Just as good assistants make the boss look good, soils with enough potassium make a lawn look good.

Experts say the amount of potassium that should be applied varies between one third and one half of the amount of nitrogen depending on soil type. This means the last number on a bag should be between one third and one half of the first number. If the first number is about 30, then the last number should be between 10 and 15. If you look at a bag of the most common, popular fertilizers, the last number is around 3, which means the fertilizer contains only about one third of what the plant needs! Is it any wonder that some lawns look worse and worse each year as the turf uses up the potassium in the soil?

What can you do? If you are really fussy about your lawn, have your soil tested to determine potassium levels. Send it off to a lab because quick strip tests are not accurate. If the results show low potassium levels, a supplement fertilizer, such as 0-0-60, can be added to raise levels. Then make changes in your yearly program by either changing brands or regularly adding the supplement. Supplement fertilizers can be found at most local garden stores, and should be applied using the guidelines of a reputable turf management professional.

If you don't want the work of making extra applications, you can buy fertilizer that has the recommended amount of potassium. It is unlikely it will be a popular brand at a box store. You can try your local garden center or ask your lawn care professional about making the switch.

For more details about potassium and fertilizing, Google "potassium for turfgrass." Look for articles that discuss the grass species you have, as they will be more appropriate. You may also call to the SWCD office at 574-936-2024, to find out more information on how/where to obtain a soil samples for your lawns

Thank You!

Kevin Lynch & Family - General Donation - 2013 BRONZE MEMBER



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St. Joseph County Soil And Water Conservation Partnership

4th Annual Producers' Breakfast & PARP Meeting

The SWCD's 4th Annual Producers Breakfast & PARP meeting was held on March 14th at the Greene Twp Community Building. A good turn out of about 35 producers' heard a good variety local of regional speakers talk on the values of utilizing cover crops and No-till practices. Producers also got their fill of breakfast which was catered by Dal-Mar Catering Service of Nappanee, IN. If you attended this event and liked the information shared, then keep an eye out for other free upcoming events. Also be sure to thank the sponsor's for the Breakfast listed below.

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- ~Rick Stoner Farms

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Are you ready to "GO GREEN" and help us save money and natural resources? We can deliver your "Conservation Kaleidoscope" newsletter by email ... Give us a call or send us an email and tell us you'd like to "GO GREEN" (: THANK YOU!!!!