

Manitoba Pasture Rejuvenation Methods

The strategies needed to rejuvenate, renovate and establish your pasture can vary according to your soil type.

In the spring of 2007, the Manitoba Forage Council interviewed producers in areas across Manitoba to see what methods they were using and their rate of success. The following reports showcase their methodology and may provide a guide for your application.

Eddystone, Manitoba

The producer interviewed lives near Eddystone, which is 30 km east of St. Rose, bordering the Parkland/Interlake border. His land does not have a lot of rocks.

Had a 100 acre hayfield of alfalfa/grass that he wanted to rejuvenate as it contained a lot of June grass.

This is the procedure he followed:

- 1st year – sprayed 1L of roundup/acre with ammonia to take care of the June grass.
- seeded barley and used it for greenfeed.
- 2nd year – sprayed 1L of roundup.
- Seeded a mixture of oats/alfalfa/grassmix/brome/canary seed.
- Cut and used it for greenfeed. Alfalfa looked spotty but it has taken
- 3rd year – hired a friend to use his sod seeder (direct seeder with 30 ft width) Seeded grass, oats, fertilizer at one time. Used a 100 lb per acre rate of NPK, not sure of rate of each. It was pretty dry last year, seeded 1 – 1 1/4 inch deep. Looked a little thin but really greened up after receiving rain.

Ashern, Manitoba

The producer had an old hayfield – very deficient in alfalfa.

This is the procedure he followed:

- Soil tested.
- Use 1L of roundup to control native vegetation.

- Seeded with alfalfa and a bit of brome grass at 8–10 lbs per acre.
- Used an old haybuster drill (direct seed) to seed, and mixed the fertilizer with it. Used about 50 lbs of potash per acre, minimal nitrogen, unsure of exact amount of potash.

Tips:

Spray and seed as early as possible in the spring to avoid hot dry stress periods and a hatch of grasshoppers which love alfalfa.

Spray your round up in fall too so you can get seeding right away.

If you have deficient soil (low in phosphate) give 25 lbs of phosphate with the seed and then give another 50 lbs in August.

Lake Francis

The land the producer renovated had recently been cleared. The soil is marginal, about 4 inches of topsoil with stones, poor drainage, high pH. It is interlake land.

This is the procedure he followed:

- Used 1 L of roundup per acre.
- Used about 25 – 50 lbs of potash (suggests use what you can afford).
- Made a mix of alfalfa/birdsfoot trefoil and grasses and broadcast on.
- Made a scraper (like a drag you use for bark scraping) to push it into the soil.
- Got good moisture and got a good take.

Tips:

He suggests the people often blame their poor pasture on grazing regimes, but he feels that it is a lack of phosphorus. Grass is too aggressive and if there is no phosphorus the legumes will peter out. He suggests adding P every 3 or 4 years to improve the success rate in his area.

Vita, Manitoba

This producer's farm is located approximately 1.5 hours east of Winnipeg. He has also run forage establishment trials for MAFRI and these are his findings.

These are the procedures he followed:

- Soil test
- Spray 1 L roundup per acre
- Broadcast 20–30 lbs of phosphate (key is to maintain fertility to legumes don't peter out).
- Use a mixture of alfalfa/timothy/trefoil/ clover (alsec possibly) but seed size should be similar so you can calibrate the drill.
- Seed $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ in deep (very important not too plant deep).
- Used two types of drills: a press drill (Moore Unidrill) and a drill from Quebec (unsure of the name).

Germination has been great but he has found that ranchers's don't always maintain the crop. The phosphate level must be managed and it must not be over grazed.

Other methods he uses:

- Seed with an airway (cultivator that has spikes that poke holes in the ground, harrow it later. Didn't give as good a result.
- Frost seeding – did it before snow melted using a 3 wheeler or snow mobile. Finds that if you do a little every year say 4 – 5 lbs per acre you will always get some catch on the legume side. Use alfalfa/trefoil/clover.
- Or, let the cows do the work. Mix a few lbs. with the minerals and the cow passes them throughout the pasture. One pound of alfalfa is 220,000 seeds. He's seen it sprouting through cow pies in the brushland.

Tips:

The goal is to do it as cheaply as possible.