



# Late Fall or Dormant Seeding Frequently Asked Questions



## Can you fall seed forages?

Seeding forages in the fall can be a very viable option in successfully establishing a forage stand if proper timing and management is practiced.

## When should dormant seeding occur?

Late fall forages should be planted from October 15 until freeze-up when night temperatures are consistently below zero.

## Why is timing of seeding so important?

The soil temperature must be below 2 degrees Celsius so that the seed will not germinate. The soil is basically storing the dormant seeds until spring, at which time, the soil will warm up signaling the seed to germinate.

## What are the advantages of fall seeding?

This timely seeding is advantageous to areas susceptible to spring flooding or peaty areas that remain wet during the summer. This process will allow the seedlings to use good moisture from winter snow.

## What are some other factors affecting the success of dormant seeding of forages?

Other things considerations when successfully establishing a healthy forage stand are the use of quality seed, use proper seeding rates and depths, and manage for weeds. A firm seedbed will allow good seed to soil contact and result in good germination and emergence. Seeding into stubble will reduce the chance of seed movement from wind and water erosion. Because some of the seeds will die over the winter, increase your seeding rates by 20 – 30%.

## What risks are involved with dormant seeding?

Seeds will start to germinate as soil warms in the spring and they could be susceptible to damaging spring frosts. Grass crops are planted the most successfully with alfalfa having variable success and sweet clover not working at all. Sweet clover seed is scarified to improve germination allowing easy up-take of water causing it to die during winter.

## What happens if I seed to early?

If you seed before the soil temperatures are low enough, germination can begin and as decreasing winter temperatures take over the seedlings will die and you will have a poor forage establishment if any next spring

## Other resources:

[Fall Seeding Forages](#)

[Late Summer and Fall Seeding of Forages](#)

[Establishing Perennial Hay and Pasture Crops](#)

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[Top of Document](#)

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