

Frost Seeding: A Cheap Alternative to Improve Hay and Pasture Land

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Frost seeding is a popular option to improve forage yield and quality. The principle of frost seeding is to broadcast forage seed in the early spring when the ground freezes at night and thaws during the day. The main advantage to fros

orchardgrass will contribute to forage yields in the seeding year while brome grass will need a full season before plants become productive. Since grass seed is light it will not throw as far as the heavier legume seeds when broadcasted. If seeded as a mixture, this difference in seed weight will result in alternating strips of grass and legume plants. Therefore seeding the species separately will result in a more even distribution of grasses and legumes. To spread the risk of frost seeding it is generally better to seed at the lower rates and repeat in successive years than to seed at higher rates in any one-year. Many people will frost seed 25% of their acreage each year so that they are spreading their risk over different years.

Table 1. Recommended species and seeding rates for frost seeding.

	Seeding rate (lb/acre)
Red clover	2 - 4
White clover	2 - 4
Birdsfoot trefoil	4
Perennial ryegrass	2 - 3
Orchardgrass	2 - 4
Smooth Brome grass	8 - 10
Timothy	Not recommended
Reed Canarygrass	Not recommended

Frost seeding can be an effective and inexpensive method to improve the quality and quantity of forage. The important key steps to success include good seed to soil contact, seeding early, proper species selection, and remove competition from seedlings. Periodic frost seeding