



# March/April Reminders

**CROPLAN**

By WINFIELD  
UNITED

## Evaluate Alfalfa Stands

- Evaluate stand density and crown health. (Follow the Reading the Stand program)
- Determine potential winterkill and actions needed.

### (Stand Evaluation Tips)

- 1) Determine stand density. This is one of the most critical decisions to achieving high yield alfalfa.
  - 5 healthy plants/ft<sup>2</sup>. Use the Stand Count Hoop.
  - Check plant for new shoots. 10-15 healthy shoots buds/Dig crowns and determine health of roots



or

**Remember:** If in question whether crown is alive or dead, simply drag the edge of your shoe across the top of the crown. If dead, the crown will simply disintegrate.

**Remember:** Crown condition and number of crowns (plant density) decline during the life of stand and NOT just during winter. Healthy crowns will have little to no discoloration while an unhealthy crown will have significant discoloration. An unhealthy crown will have fewer shoots and result in lower yield.



## Tips for Determining Winterkill

- Damage typically occurs in areas of the field that have been covered by ice.
- Easiest way to check for winter kill is by digging up crowns and looking at the roots. Just after the soil thaws they will have a gray, water-soaked appearance. Once the water leaves roots will be brown, dehydrated and stringy.
- If 50% or more of the alfalfa field is damaged there are a few options to discuss:
  - Rotate to corn and direct seed new seeding of alfalfa into corn or bean ground. Be aware of residual chemistry.
- If 50% or less of the field is damaged: interseed perennial ryegrass 1-2lbs/ac OR convert the entire field to a sudan hybrid variety like Rocket®

## Finalize Spring Seeding Plans

- Finalize crop plan; determine which fields will be rotated and spring seeded or late summer seeded with alfalfa.
- Determine the seed technology best suited for the farm (HarvXtra, RR, or Conventional) and coating (including organic) option needs.
- Discuss alfalfa seeding methods and importance of alfalfa seed placement.
- Discuss importance of seed bed prep and not planting into a fluffy soil.
  - Too soft of seedbed can affect proper seed germination
  - Fluffy soil increases chance of high ash content on first cutting that can impact forage quality.

