



Spring Seeding into Damaged Alfalfa Stands

Increase productivity when hay fields show injury coming out of winter

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS: For Keeping the Stand One Year or Less

1. **Harvest first crop alfalfa and renovate.**

Plant [corn silage](#), [forage sorghum](#), [sorghum sudangrass or another annual](#) after first crop alfalfa. Planting these forages in mid-May to late June may be the best option for tonnage and quality. Soil temperatures need to be above 60° for the sorghums, allowing time for first-crop alfalfa to be harvested with ample growing season remaining for a full harvested forage crop.

Remember that forage sorghum is closer to corn silage for feeding, while sorghum sudangrass and sudangrass will carry more protein and have more NDFd. They would fit in the ration between alfalfa and corn silage. Know what the farm needs for feed inventory. Sorghum sudangrass, hybrid sudangrass and millet can be managed to accommodate forage needs. Timing of harvest will affect forage qualities. This may be the best option for many producers. [Summer Blend](#) (warm-season grasses, summer legumes and brassicas) would be a good fit for grazing.

2. **[Green Spirit](#) at the rate of 8 - 12#/acre**

Italian ryegrass will generally only persist for one season but may potentially overwinter for a spring harvest or be used as a plow down for green manure. Green Spirit would fit best for silage or baleage. It does not dry down well for hay.

Green Spirit makes very high quality forage with very digestible fibers and would be considered dairy quality forage if harvested timely. Summer heat and humidity can reduce stand life and summer production. Avoid drought-prone soils such as sand and low-fertility environments.

3. **Hakari brome at the rate of 8 -12#/acre**

Unlike smooth brome, which spreads by rhizomes, Hakari Alaska brome is a tillering type plant much like wheat. Nicknamed “rescue grass,” Hakari is fast to establish and will contribute to the forage yield in its first season. It also dries well for very good quality hay.

Hakari is a short-lived perennial that will persist for two to three years with proper management. Mowing height needs to be such as to leave three to four inches of stubble. Hakari likes fertile, well-drained soils and will tolerate heat to grow throughout the season.



4. **Triticale at the rate of 30 – 50#/acre**

Triticale offers a large crop of very good quality forage and allows for a summer annual such as forage sorghum or sorghum sudangrass to be planted behind it in June. Seed the triticale into the existing alfalfa stand as early as possible in the spring. This gives one crop of alfalfa and triticale, then allows time for a summer annual crop.

5. **PCS 6010 Teff at the rate of 4 – 6# per acre**

Teff is an annual cereal crop that has fine leaves and will dry well for hay. Harvest first crop and seed teff into existing stand. Manage the crop with harvest schedule based on the teff's maturity. Harvest teff in the boot stage and leave a residual stubble height of four inches.

Teff is a very small seeded forage and a good no-till drill or a firm seedbed is required for successful establishment. Note: Prairie Creek Seed has only Yellow Jacket coated Moxie teff. This will **NOT** work for organics. Seed when soils are 65° and rising.

LONG-TERM OPTIONS: For Keeping the Stand 1-3 Years

Note: Adding 3 – 4# per acre of Freedom! MR red clover would benefit the forage stand if the farm is going to maintain the existing alfalfa stand for two years.

1. **Hakari brome at the rate of 8 -12#/acre**

Known as “rescue grass,” Hakari Alaska brome will provide high-quality forage and dry well for hay. Hakari is a short-lived perennial, so it will persist for two to three years in a stand. It performs well in fertile, well-drained soils. Harvest management will be important.

2. **TetraMag hybrid ryegrass or perennial ryegrass at the rate of 6 -8 #/acre**

Perennial ryegrass is fast to establish and will persist under good conditions for a couple of years. Perennial ryegrass likes fertile soils with good organic matter and water. Because it is slow to dry for hay, it will work best for silage and baleage. TetraMag will provide very high quality forage.

3. **Energy Plus blend at the rate of 8 -10# per acre**

Energy Plus is mix of Italian ryegrass, perennial ryegrass, soft tall fescue, meadow fescue. This blend will provide quick-establishing grasses plus more persistent grasses for longer term establishment.

Energy Plus will work best as silage and baleage with the ryegrass portion as perennial ryegrass tends to dry slower. This blend would maximize tonnage and quality and is a good option if the farm needs to keep an alfalfa rotation in place for two or more years.

