

# Burrus Buzz

*Delivering more than just seed!*

April 10, 2015



## Assessing Alfalfa Stand Condition in the Spring

by Dow Agro Sciences

The early winter with sub zero temperatures, and then periods of ice and standing water on lower sections of the fields may be of concern for alfalfa winterkill this spring. We will not know the severity of winterkill until the alfalfa greens up. Be sure to walk the fields and dig up plants to make the correct assessment of potential damage.

Stand assessment should be evaluated by looking at:

- 1. Are the plants alive?** As soon as the frost comes out of the soil, dig up a few plants 4-6 inches deep and look at the condition of the tap root. If the root is firm or turgid, it is alive and healthy. If it is soft and browned like the photo, it is dead or dying.
- 2. Are there thin spots in the field?** A healthy stand capable of maximum yields should have 55 stems/ft<sup>2</sup>. Regarding plant count, a high yielding alfalfa stand should have at least 20 plants/ft<sup>2</sup>. If stands are less than 12 plants/ft<sup>2</sup>, the crop should be rotated.



### What can be done for emergency forages this spring?

#### 1. Can I interseed to thicken the stand?

Interseeding alfalfa on stands over 1 year old will not work due to autotoxicity. To thicken up thin, older stands there are two options:

Extend the stand **one season**: Plant Italian Ryegrass at a rate of 25-40#/s/acre.

Extend the stand **multiple seasons**: Plant either Orchard Grass or Tall Fescue at a rate of 8-15#/s/acre.

#### 2. When can I reseed alfalfa into the same field?

For stands seeded in 2014 (less than 1 year old), fields can be disked and then reseeded immediately or no-till seeded with little risk of autotoxicity. Older stands should be rotated to another crop before reseeding.

#### 3. What legume credits can I expect from the killed alfalfa?

For a stand that is more than 1 year old you can expect 150 lbs N/acre legume credit if there were at least 4 plants/ft<sup>2</sup>. For 2014 seeded alfalfa, legume credits would be about 90 lbs N/acre if top growth was not harvested and about 60 lbs if only stubble was left prior to winter.



Thin alfalfa stand

### Twitter Alfalfa Insect Series

Burrus has also recently presented information on alfalfa insect pests in a Twitter-based educational series. The initial part of that series, dealing with alfalfa weevil, can be found at the following links:

[https://twitter.com/matt\\_montgo/status/583594605599264768](https://twitter.com/matt_montgo/status/583594605599264768)

[https://twitter.com/matt\\_montgo/status/583596426615074818](https://twitter.com/matt_montgo/status/583596426615074818)