

Fall Alfalfa Management

Stand persistence and yields in the northeast is directly correlated to:

Soil pH

- Maintain soil pH above 6.5 for the life of the alfalfa stand
- soil test and apply lime the year before seeding, fall apply to existing stands if needed
 - Ca and Mg levels are also important

Fertility levels

- Alfalfa uses 15 lbs of P_2O_5 /acre per ton of dry matter yield, and 50 lbs of K_2O /acre per ton of dry matter yield
 - 5 ton yield needs 80 lbs/acre of P_2O_5 and 250 lbs/acre of K_2O per year
 - Manure can be used to bank up P and K levels, but aging stands still need top dressed to stay healthy
 - If you don't have a soil test, apply 0-10-40 in split applications after first and third cuttings based on yields
 - Low K levels significantly increase the likely hood of winter kill. Used in N fixation, and photosynthesis
- Alfalfa is a relatively big user of Boron, 2 lbs/acre
 - Add it to your top dress, especially if applying sulfur, both are anions and compete for uptake
- Consider sulfur deficiencies
 - Alfalfa removes about 5 lbs/acre per ton of dry matter
 - Reduction in acid rain is leaving some areas deficient
 - Can top dress with sulfate fertilizers, get some from manure
 - Elemental sulfur is slow to convert to plant available form, only use if incorporate high rate at establishment

Fall Harvest management

- Allow at least 45 days of regrowth before the final fall harvest
- Leave 6" of stubble any harvest after Sept 1st, especially post frost harvest
- Avoid fall harvest in wet conditions

