

## Seeding Depth Influences Clover Emergence

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One of the most common forage recommendations made across the Southeast is to plant clovers in grass pastures. Research at The University of Tennessee has shown that seeding red and white clover in tall fescue pastures and hayfields can reduce fertilizer needs. The yield of a tall fescue-clover mixture will be equal to a pure tall fescue stand fertilized in spring with 60 lb of nitrogen per acre. With the price of fertilizer, this can save a significant amount of money.

Many producers experience inconsistent results in clover stand establishment. There are many reasons for the difference in producer experiences with clover success. Seeding rate and environmental conditions are two common reasons. But one of the most common reasons for the failure of clover seed to emerge and establish is due to planting the seed too deep. Clover seed is very small, and needs to be planted less than ¼ inch deep. Using no-till drills to plant clover seed in February and March can make it difficult to control seeding depth. The drills are heavy and the ground is soft. For this reason, it is often better to broadcast the seed on top of the ground.

The steps to planting clover into a fescue pasture are:

- Fertilize according to soil test. Establishment and yield of clovers will be enhanced if the proper pH and nutrient levels are provided. **Do not add nitrogen.** Nitrogen will not kill clovers, but it stimulates grass growth, and increases the potential of the clover being shaded out by the grass.
- Seed 2 lb ladino white clover and 4 lb red clover per acre. With the clovers, be sure to use pre-inoculated seed, or inoculate the seed yourself.
- Seed the mixture from February 15 to March 1.
- Don't graze until the pasture is 8 inches tall. This will allow the clovers to develop a root system and not get pulled out of the ground by grazing.

Make sure that you utilize this simple tool to improve the quality of pastures and hayfields while at the same time reducing costs.

### **Important dates to remember:**

February 18-19      2014 Mid-South Stocker Conference, Paris Landing State Park  
March 25-26        Artificial Insemination Certification, MTREC, Spring Hill, TN