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## **Proper Pasture Renovation Means Good Grass Stands**

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Pasture renovation is one of the most important and most expensive cultural practices in forage production. Renovation costs could range from \$ 165 per acre for seeded forages to \$215 per acre for sprigged grasses (pangola, stargrass, hemarthria and bermudagrass) on previously established pastures.

Commercial growers normally consider pasture renovation only one to 30 days prior to replanting the pasture. Generally, the existing pasture is tilled several times with a large disk or mold-board plow, allowed to dry for one or two weeks and then seeded or planted. Most pasture renovation cultural practices occur in June and July which coincide with thunder showers, making it difficult to dry-out the existing vegetation. Forage cultivars seeded or planted in these poorly prepared seed-beds, result in stand failures with 50 to 75 percent of the pasture contaminated with common bermudagrass or other undesirable plant species.

To obtain excellent stands of new improved grasses, one must start with a completely renovated pasture void of all vegetation. A well prepared seed-bed for pasture grasses must be similar to a seed bed used for vegetables.

Two procedures can be followed for pasture renovation and establishment:

1. Plowing or rototilling a pasture in the fall (November) seeding, (ryegrass or small grain) disking and rolling the same day. If pastures are tilled but not seeded the same day valuable moisture is lost, resulting in stand failures. Fertilization of winter annuals should be after seeding emergence consisting of 35-30-60 lb/A N-P2Os K2O per acre. A second application of N (35 lb/A) should be applied after the first grazing mid to late January and a third application of 35 lb N/acre in early March should be sufficient for continuous winter (ryegrass production. When (ryegrass dies, the seed bed should be disked periodically (April to June) to control existing undesirable weeds and common bermudagrass found growing in the (ryegrass The seed bed is now ready for reestablishment of the perennial grass.
2. The second method is to initiate seed bed tillage in late March or early April to take advantage of this normal droughty period. A follow-up of periodic disking between April and June, especially several days after a rain, is required to control germinating seedlings and to dry out existing common bermudagrass and other vegetation.

Either method should result in a well prepared seed bed for a June or July planting of a perennial grass. Remember, reestablish perennial grass pastures immediately after adequate and continuous moisture is available. If pastures are not planted to perennial grass when rain starts, it will be difficult to keep the renovated area free of unwanted vegetation.

The following steps should be considered when establishing seeded or sprigged grasses.

1. Distribute adequate seed or vegetative material uniformly over the renovated area.
2. Cover and pack seed or vegetative material. Vegetative material needs to be disked into the soil 15 minutes after distribution because of high soil surface temperatures. If vegetative material remains on the soil surface 1 to 15 hours, 50 percent of the plant material could die.
3. After signs of seedling emergence or tiller (shoot) development (one to two weeks), land area needs to be sprayed for weed control and fertilized. If newly planted pastures are not sprayed within two weeks, poor weed control will result. For specific instructions call AREC, Ona

941-735-1314.