

OLD RECOMMENDATIONS CAN STILL BE GOOD RECOMMENDATIONS

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The other week I was speaking at a field day and at a break someone made a comment about a recommendation I made that was the same as I made 20 years ago. That got me to thinking this weekend about the various recommendations from The University of Tennessee, and how often they change. I was cleaning and oiling my boots as I was doing this. I looked down and saw my shoe shine box.

This box was my grandfather's, and was given to me after he passed away approximately 40 years ago. I don't know how long he had it. It is just as good today as it was when I got it. Probably the same as when my grandfather got it. It's old, but it does its job quite well. I have never even considered getting a new shoe shine box.

That is the same attitude we should have about some of our forage recommendations. One of those is using clovers in pastures. This is a recommendation that has been around for a long time. Clovers provide many benefits to pastures, including nitrogen contribution and improved quality. Just because it is an old recommendation doesn't mean that we need to get rid of it. If it works, we need to keep it.

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.

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.

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