Things to Consider Before Sprigging Bermudagrass This Spring

It is now time to start thinking about sprigging bermudagrass here in East Texas. Sprigging bermudagrass is an expensive investment, but if done properly, it can pay for itself rather quickly. So here is some recommendations that you may take to reduce the risk of bermudagrass stand failure.

Site Selection
Bermuda grass is a perennial warm-season grass. Therefore, it will be in production for many years after establishment. Soil type is important to the amount of forage produced through the life of the stand. You would not want to spend lots of money investing in a high-yielding, expensive variety if you have poor productive soil. So look to produce bermudagrass on highly productive soils.

Soil Testing
Before breaking the ground, be sure that you have done a soil test. A soil test provides information regarding the plants nutrients supplying power of the soil. Also it identifies the soils pH and plant nutrients which are sufficient and those that are deficient. Fertilizer and liming recommendations will be given to correct any nutrient deficiencies your soil may have. Soil testing is a great tool to reduce the risk of bermudagrass failure and bring the stand into production faster. For soil testing bags and information sheet please come by the Tyler County Extension Office.

Seedbed Preparation
The number one goal when establishing a seedbed is to make sure that it is clod free and firm. A firm seedbed allows for better sprig to soil contact and improves the use of soil moisture. Primary tillage is typically deeper and is accomplished by using an offset disk for one or two passes. The next step is secondary tillage. Secondary tillage will be dependent on the soil type and the amount of clods caused by the primary tillage. Heavy textured soil may need one to two passes using a tandem disk. Secondary tillage is the best time to apply any needed fertilizer to allow for shallow incorporation.

Sprigging
For your best results, sprigging should be done in the middle of March. It is very important that your sprigs are fresh. Do not allow sprigs to sit on a truck or trailer for a very long period of time. Ideally, sprigs should be put into the ground the same day they are dug. Sprig no less than 25 bushels per acre (30 bushels per acre is recommended) at a depth of two inches. An application of nitrogen is recommended once the sprigs have greened up and runners are approximately four to six inches long.

First Year Management
Management of bermudagrass stand in the first year is crucial. Often weed control is needed within the first year. Before applying an herbicide, make certain that your bermudagrass is well rooted and that weeds are heavy enough to inhibit stand establishment. Usually, one quart of 2, 4- D per acre is enough to reduce weed competition. If on the other hand hard to control weeds
need attention. Products such as Grazon P & D can be used (recommended if stand is threatened). Also limiting haying or grazing the stand through the first growing season. Hopefully this summer will provide great growing conditions, so that the stand will completely cover the soil surface and a fair amount of excess forage will be produced. If an excess amount of forage is produced, either hay or lightly grazing the new established bermudagrass late in the growing season (August & September), taking care to not let forage get below a stubble height of five inches. Remember when planting bermudagrass, you first year goal is to get a good stand, anything more should be considered a bonus to you.

**Annual Maintenance**

Beginning in year two the management of your bermudagrass should be increased. Always fertilize to meet your yield goals. Your goals could be one of two things: simply fertilizing to meet tons of forage per acre or to meet current livestock demand. Always stay current with your soil testing by sampling at least once every three years. Weed control should be implemented by sound soil fertility and grazing programs. Should a herbicide be needed to control weeds, products such as Grazon P + D can be used in the second year.

If you have any questions regarding the establishment of your bermudagrass of any other agriculture matter, please feel free to call the Tyler County Extension Office at 283-8284.