

As we discussed last week, one important thing to be thinking about this time of year is what type of forage will be available to your cattle this winter. The use of clover may prove to be a cost effective and fairly simple method of providing late winter/early spring forage to your cattle. This week we will talk about one variety known as ball clover, and will discuss planting tips, and the benefits of using this clover.

When deciding where to plant ball clover, there are a few things that you should keep in mind. Ball clover is an annual variety of clover that may be identified by its small, rounded white blooms. Ball clover does best when planted in hilly pastures and poor quality areas where bare ground is present. Planting ball clover in other areas is an option, although it is not always the most effective management plan. Planting in areas of poor quality forage allows the clover to do well because it has little to no competition for the surrounding soil nutrients.

There are several steps that can be taken to improve the establishment of ball clover. First, the pH of the soil should be checked before planting. Lime should be applied on the pasture if pH is less than 6.0. Because ball clover needs moisture to improve its establishment it should not be planted before late October. If you don't receive any fall moisture, wait until mid-January to plant the clover. Applying one pound of seed per acre is adequate for a good establishment. Ball clover seed does well if it has been worked into the ground when it is planted. This can be achieved by throwing the seed, then drag it with a tire drag. It is not necessary to fertilize the planted areas. Mixing the ball clover with crimson or arrowleaf clover may help produce a higher quality first year clover pasture.

Once ball clover is established in your pasture it will improve poor and non-productive pastures. Additionally, it provides necessary protein in late winter and early spring forages and fertilizes summer forages. In short, ball clover creates a good quality, low maintenance pasture for your cattle to graze. For more information about the use of ball clover, please contact us.

Thanks,

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