

Baling Soybeans

By Andy Luke, Regional Agronomy Specialist

The prolonged drought in Northwest Missouri has forced many farmers to consider baling their soybeans as a forage crop this year. While soybeans are an excellent feed source for cattle, producers need to take into consideration the herbicides that were sprayed on the soybeans throughout the growing season. Some herbicides such as Roundup and Sencor have pre-harvest application intervals of less than 30 days, allowing the soybeans to be cut or grazed after this time period. Most herbicides though, such as Liberty, dicamba products and most residual herbicides are not allowed to be grazed or harvested for forage or hay. Be sure to read and follow all label directions before harvesting soybeans that have been treated with herbicides.

An alternative source of forage this fall would be grazing hay fields or other areas with established stands of perennial grasses. Most pastures and hayfields in the area are seeded with cool-season grasses such as tall fescue or brome. These grasses will produce most of their annual growth during the cool spring months before going nearly dormant during the hot summer. With cool fall temperatures, additional grass growth can be expected in late August and September. To encourage additional growth, consider adding nitrogen or phosphorus to your hayfields to give the grass an additional boost. Nitrogen can improve both yield and protein content of grass, while also making the plants more vigorous, leading to thicker stands. Phosphorus is essential for root growth and development, especially in new or damaged grass pastures. In a year such as this, adding phosphorus to pastures that have been over-grazed may lead to additional grass growth this fall and next spring. Before adding phosphorus, consider getting a soil test to know the nutrient levels of your fields. Also, keep in mind that fertilizer that has been broadcast will require up to ½ of an inch of rainfall to be incorporated into the soil. Try to time your fertilizer application before a rainfall event to prevent fertilizer losses.

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