



Organic Alfalfa Production

Joan Quinn, New Mexico Organic Commodity Commission

There has been a big increase in organic certification of alfalfa in the last year, primarily in response to the organic certification of three dairies in eastern NM (with more in the pipeline). Estimated acres of organically grown alfalfa in NM in 2007 are about 20,000 acres. Organic livestock producers are required to feed only certified organic feed/forage. Organic alfalfa is also sought after by organic beef and lamb producers, and there is considerable interest in the horse community, especially for race and show horses. There appears to be a strong market for the foreseeable future. As of late, there was a price premium of approximately 30% for organic alfalfa, but this can vary depending on the availability of alfalfa in any given season, and of course, on the quality of the alfalfa. One of the biggest problems with organic production of alfalfa is controlling the alfalfa weevil. The easiest organic fix for this is early-season grazing, though there are many other possible controls. A link to the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service bulletin on organic alfalfa production that growers will find useful can be accessed at: <http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/PDF/alfalfa.pdf>.

To gain organic certification, a field must have been free of any synthetic inputs for three years (this includes the use of treated seed). A full list of prohibited substances, as well as the regulations governing organic production can be found in the Organic Certification Handbook on the NMOCC website at <http://nmocc.state.nm.us>. At this website producers can also obtain a copy of the application for organic certification. Organic management practices must be adhered to by the producer and records must be kept. ATTRA, referenced above, also has great record-keeping forms for organic producers and several helpful bulletins about organic field crop production. The cost for organic certification is \$175 per year which includes an annual inspection. In addition, an assessment of one half of one percent on gross organic sales (\$50 on \$10,000) is levied. I would be happy to talk to anyone who is interested in organic certification, and help them through the process. I can be reached at the phone number below, or through email. The application process can seem intimidating, but the record keeping, etc., is really not much more than what a careful farmer would want to improve his farming practices. A workshop on organic certification in the Clovis/Portales area will be held at the end of March 2008. Anyone interested in the workshop should contact: Joan Quinn, New Mexico Organic Commodity Commission, (505) 841-9067, joan.quinn@state.nm.us, for more information.

Herbicides and Harvest Aids for Alfalfa

Below is a list of selected herbicides labeled for use on alfalfa and their effectiveness on various weeds. This list is compiled every year by Kansas State University, Cooperative Extension Service and is published in 'Chemical Weed Control for Field Crops, Pastures, Rangeland, and Noncropland'. This publication includes weed control options for several row crops, but also includes alfalfa and native and improved pastures. This publication can be accessed at: <http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/crps12/srp977.pdf>. New Mexico growers should check labels of herbicides for specific application instructions and NM exceptions to these general guidelines.

Mark Marsalis, Mark Marsalis, Extension Agronomist—New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity employer. All programs are available to everyone regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap or national origin, New Mexico State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

Weed Response to Selected Alfalfa Herbicides when Applied According to Label Directions^{1,2}

2007 Chemical Weed Control for Field Crops, Pastures, Rangeland, and Noncropland
 Kansas State University, Coop. Extn. Serv. Pub. SRP 977

Herbicide(s)	Crop Tolerance	Winter Annuals								Summer Annuals								Perennial		
		Grasses			Broadleaf					Grasses				Broadleaf						
		Downy Brome	Japanese Brome	Cheat	Prickly Lettuce	Tansy Mustard	Treacle Mustard	Field Pennygrass	Shepherdspurse	Barnyardgrass	Crabgrass	Foxtail	Field Sandbur	Kochia	Lambsquarters	Morningglory	Pigweed		Common Ragweed	Pennsylvania Smartweed
Preplant																				
Balan	G	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	E	E	E	E	-	F-G	-	F-G	-	-	-
Eptam	F-G	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F-G	E	E	E	E	-	F-G	F	F-G	-	-	-
Treflan	F-G	F-G	F-G	F-G	-	-	-	-	-	E	E	E	E	-	F-G	-	F-G	-	-	-
Postemergence to Alfalfa/Pre- to weeds																				
Eptam	F-G	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	E	E	E	E	-	F-G	F	F-G	-	-	-
Prowl H ₂ O	G	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	E	E	E	G-E	F-G	G-E	-	G-E	-	-	-
Treflan HFP	F-E	G	G	G	-	-	-	-	-	E	E	E	G-E	F-G	G-E	-	G-E	-	-	-
Zorial	G	G	-	G	-	G	G	-	G	G	E	E	F-G	F	-	-	G	F	F	-
Postemergence																				
Arrow, Select, Volunteer	E	G-E	G-E	G-E	-	-	-	-	-	E	G	E	E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Buctril, Moxy (Seedling only)	G	-	-	-	-	-	-	G-E	G-E	-	-	-	-	G	G-E	G	F-G	G	G-E	-
Butyrac 200, 2,4-D B200	F-G	-	-	-	-	G	G	G	G	-	-	-	-	F-G	G-E	G-E	G-E	G-E	G-E	G-E
Glyphosate (Roundup Ready only)	E	E	E	E	G	E	E	E	E	G	E	E	E	G	G	G	E	G	E	F-G
Gramoxone Inteon	F	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	G	G	G	G	F-G	G	G	G	G	G	G
Pursuit	G-E	-	-	-	-	G-E	G-E ²	G-E	G-E	F-G	F	G	-	G	F	G	G ²	F	G	F
Poast, Poast Plus	E	G	G	G	-	-	-	-	-	E	G	E	E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Raptor	G-E	G-E	E	E	-	E	E ²	E	E	F-G	F-G	G-E	-	G ²	G	G	G ²	F	G	F
Dormant Treatments																				
Gramoxone Inteon	E	F	F	F	G	F	G	G	G	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Karmex	G	-	-	-	E	E	E	E	E	G-E	G-E	G-E	F	G	E	G	E	E	F-G	-
Pursuit	G-E	-	-	-	-	G-E	G-E ²	G-E	G-E	F-G	F-G	G-E	-	G	G	G	G ²	F	G	F
Sencor	G	G	G	G	-	E	E	E	E	F	F	F	-	E	E	-	G	E	E	F
Sinbar	G	G	G	G	E	E	E	E	E	G	G	G	G	G-E	E	E	G	E	E	G
Velpar	G	G	G	G	F	E	E	E	E	-	F	G	-	F	G	-	G	-	-	G
Velpar AlfaMax PM	G	G	G	G	E	E	E	E	E	G-E	G-E	G-E	-	G	E	G	E	E	F-G	G
Velpar AlfaMax Gold	G	G	G	G	E	E	E	E	E	E	G-E	G-E	-	G-E	E	G	E	E	F-G	G

¹ Weed response ratings refer to application according to label directions and with favorable growing conditions: E = Excellent; G = Good; F = Fair; P = Poor; and - = weed not listed on the herbicide label.

² Except where resistant weed populations have developed.