

MINNESOTA - Evaluation of Winter Survival Test***Craig Sheaffer, University of Minnesota***

Winter injury greatly influences alfalfa stand persistence and profitability. Marketed alfalfa varieties are categorized for winter injury tolerance using standards developed by North American Alfalfa Improvement Conference. Recent mild winters, like 2015-2016, may indicate lower levels of winterhardiness are necessary for Upper Midwest survival. We are re-evaluating winter injury test protocol and winter survival of modern alfalfa varieties. The test has several check varieties ranging from very winterhardy 5262 (winter survival rating of 2) to non-winterhardy Cuf 101 (winter survival rating of 6) as well as nearly 30 currently marketed varieties. Varieties were planted spring 2015, intensively harvested, and allowed to overwinter. We are comparing winter survival of alfalfa planted in single plant rows with winter survival of those planted in broadcast-seeded plots. We will evaluate plant survival in early May.