

MINNESOTA - Alfalfa & Clover Response to Horse Grazing

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Legumes like alfalfa and red clover offer energy and protein for horses needing a higher plane of nutrition. By grazing horses on legumes, owners may be able to eliminate added diet concentrates. Equine scientists (Devan Catalano; Krishona Martinson) and agronomists (Craig Sheaffer; Scott Wells) are determining nutritive value and alfalfa and clover yield when frequently grazed at about bud stage by adult horses. There were no yield, persistence, or nutritive value differences among grazing tolerant alfalfa varieties with fall dormancies of 2-5. Alfalfa yield was 6 tons/ac. Red and white clover had less yield compared to the maximum yielding alfalfa with average yields of 2.6 tons/ac. Red clover had among the highest crude protein concentration. White clover had the greatest non-structural carbohydrate levels; red clover had the lowest. Grazing will continue to study effects on persistence.