

News Column  
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For Release 02/13/17  
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## FERTILIZING BROME

This year I have an excuse for not having fertilized my brome yet. My pickup has been in the shop, having some body work done.

I realize I'm losing all credibility as a farmer by having my pickup repaired. A real farmer would just drive it that way, and maybe even be proud of the dents. But, the other person's insurance is paying for the repair, so I've chosen to take a little pride in what I drive instead of pocketing the cash.

The accident happened way back in September. I had just reached the north edge of Manhattan, where the speed limit drops from 65 to 55 mph, when I glanced in my mirror and saw a vehicle approaching rapidly. I don't know how fast they were going, but I had just enough time for my brain to ask, "Am I not even moving?" before being slammed from behind.

After regaining control, I pulled into the Dara's driveway to assess the damage to my truck and to check on the other driver. Just as I opened my door I saw a small SUV-type vehicle, with a crumpled hood and steam pouring out, drive right on by.

What? Hit and run? I don't think so...

My daughter had been the victim of a hit and run in a Kansas City church parking lot just four days earlier. That one was going to cost me \$1,000 (my deductible) and I immediately told myself that wasn't happening again.

I hopped right back in my truck and went after them, knowing I would catch up if I could

keep them in sight. You see, I've been to demolition derbies and I know that steaming vehicles don't last long. This one went about three miles before pulling over.

So, that's my excuse. My pickup is in the shop. I probably could have fertilized my brome in late November, or in December before the ground froze up, but I didn't. Now that I've waited though, I'll try to get the job done by the middle of March.

Spring applications of fertilizer to brome should be made after the soil thaws to avoid having a rain wash the fertilizer away instead of soaking it into the soil. The problem with waiting until spring is that timely application is often delayed because of wet soils.

By waiting until spring, some years it will be mid-May before we can apply fertilizer. Most years, that's too late to get the full benefit of the fertilizer application.

Ideally, we would soil test in August, then apply fertilizer as indicated by the test results. If brome is to be grazed in both the fall and spring, then about one third to one half of the nitrogen should be applied in late August or early September. If it will only be grazed in the spring, then everything can be applied in the December to March window, but when the ground isn't frozen.

For this part of the state, I usually recommend applying 80 to 100 pounds of nitrogen and 20 pounds of phosphorus. Then I suggest taking a soil test so we can be more accurate with phosphorus the next year.

Eighty pounds of N is probably enough on fields that will be hayed. Over-fertilization of hay fields can lead to hay loss due to lodging. On the other hand, fields that will be grazed might benefit from the 100 pound rate. If brome is kept short with grazing, lodging isn't an issue.

Potassium is rarely needed in this part of Kansas, but sulfur is sometimes deficient. Where sulfur is deficient, research has shown a yield increase of 500 to 800 pounds of forage per

acre from applying the recommended amount of sulfur.

A soil test is the only way to know if sulfur is really needed. A profile sample to a depth of 24 inches should be taken to determine sulfur needs. Soil samples to test for P and K should be taken to a six inch depth. If you are testing for P, K, and S, then we need two separate samples – one from the zero to six inch profile, and the other representing the zero to 24 inch profile.

I will always recommend soil testing, but at this point I might not wait for the test results. I will probably take advantage of these warm spring days and get my brome fertilized,....just as soon as I get my pickup back from the shop.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to [gmclure@ksu.edu](mailto:gmclure@ksu.edu).

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