



NEWS RELEASE

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Alfalfa Winter Injury & Kill: Evaluating Stands for 2020

This past winter was certainly variable with the weather patterns. While this past winter was not as harsh as last winter there are some reports of potential problems in some alfalfa fields.

Farmers will need to go out and evaluate their alfalfa fields to determine each field's condition and if any of them did not survive well enough to keep.

Here are some tips to help you get started on evaluating alfalfa fields for winter injury:

- **Stands which are slow to green up.**
Compare your stand to other fields in the area. If you notice that some areas are starting to grow and other areas of your alfalfa field still brown, it is time to check those brown stands for injury or death.
- **Winter-killed roots will have a gray appearance.**
If the root is soft and water can be easily squeezed from it, or it has a brown color, it is a possible sign of winter cold-related death.
- **Asymmetrical growth and uneven growth.**
These are also two indicators of winter injury. Compare the shoots on the same plant, and if you notice that one set of shoots seems to be drastically outperforming another in terms of growth, it could be that winter cold damaged the bud structure of your plants.

If you think some stands have been injured, you can follow this guideline to make decisions on if a stand should be kept or rotated out of alfalfa.

Stem Density (stems/sq.ft)	Management Decision
Under 40	Poor yield potential. Good candidate to rotate out of alfalfa
40-55	Some limitations on yield potential
Over 55	No limitations on yield potential

UW Extension has a good publication with additional information and really nice pictures of roots in different health conditions at the following website to assist evaluating alfalfa stands:
<https://tinyurl.com/y39n5mf4>

Contact your local UW Extension Office for more information.