

## WHEN DOES A SEED BECOME A PLANT?

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Everyone wants to have a pasture that is beautiful, productive, high quality, without any weeds. If we could snap our fingers and make it happen, lots of problems could be avoided. We all know that we don't wake up one morning with a well-established stand of grass. The question is what do we need to do to get there? There are many steps in the process, but we need to realize that it starts with the seed.

We all would agree that you can't have a plant without first starting with a seed. Some people will just throw some seed on the ground with very little preparation or thought into what the seed needs to be able to grow and be productive. Then, when the field is weedy, poorly established and unproductive, they wonder "Where did I go wrong?" The answer should be obvious.

There are some people that put a little more effort in. They provide the nutrients needed by the plant, and they even will try to keep some of the weeds out. Things seem to be moving toward a productive field, but they get distracted for a year or two and ... things go haywire. They find themselves trying to clean up a mess that could have easily been avoided.

Then there are some people that make one simple mistake. They do everything right from the production side, but they failed to realize the value of the seed, and the importance of protecting it prior to it being planted. The seed contains an embryo. The embryo is respiring and functioning in ways very similar to an adult plant. It just can't provide nutrients for itself. But it is alive, and everything humanly possible needs to be done to protect that seed from harm so that it can develop and grow into a productive plant. Here are a few things to keep in mind when thinking about seed:

- **All seed is valuable** – it doesn't matter if it is tall fescue, alfalfa, or clover, the seed is where plant life begins. Value it.
- **Before getting your seed, plan** – don't just scatter seed without preparation. The preparation is often the difference between success and failure.
- **Don't be satisfied with letting a portion of the seed die** – letting some of the seed be killed prior to germination is a shame. What is acceptable – 10%, 20%? Don't accept any death. Protect the seed as best you can.
- **If you know of someone that has seed and needs help getting the seed to a plant, help them** - maybe you know of someone that isn't as prepared as they should be. Then try to help. It may mean helping them get the seed out of the ground. Or it might mean helping them find someone else to plant the seed. Just don't let the seed go to waste.

I usually write these articles to teach some aspect of forage production. This article, however, has nothing to do with plants.