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Reseeding Pasture Can Help

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WESTCLIFFE, Colo. — Hay trucks are rolling and the fields are alive with hay equipment. Stacks of hay are testimonials of the growth of the hay crop for 2003 but there is still a long way to go to get the hay fields and the rangeland back to optimum production after the drought years. The fields and rangeland need to be seeded to replace the grass that didn't survive the drought.

When there is an abundance of weedy annual or perennial broadleaf plants in the meadow and the grass didn't produce well, it is time to consider interseeding desirable grasses. The telltale sign of land needing help is when there is large amounts of bare ground.

Interseeding is a good method of seeding new grass since it doesn't disturb the existing grasses. It is also possible to add legumes to the grass dominated pastures thus improving both the quantity and quality of the forage.

Without tilling the soil a grass drill can be ran over the land. It will place the seed in contact with the soil for better germination of the grass seeds. Interseeding avoids erosion, reduces costs and allows for haying or grazing quicker than conventional tillage.

If the land has irrigation possibilities, seed in the spring prior to the start of irrigation. Seeding could be done from March through early May.

Late summer may be a possibility but the risk is greater of not getting a good stand. Seeding in mid-August following haying or heavy grazing might make it work. The seeds need 6 to 8 weeks before the first hard frost for the grass plants to survive the winter.

Late fall prior to the ground freezing is a good time to consider for a high mountain climate. This is commonly known as dormant seeding. Seed the grass from mid-September to mid-October depending on the elevation. The key is to make sure the soil won't warm up and cause the seeds to germinate right before winter hits. Dormant seeding will allow the seeds to sit in the soil while collecting winter snow moisture and spring rain. When the soil warms the seeds are there with moisture and ready to grow.

- **For more information on interseeding pastures, contact a local extension agent.**