

Using Sainfoin to Spruce up old Alfalfa Stands



Alfalfa is king when it comes to forage crops, and for good reason. It is high yielding, protein-rich, and ideal for multiple cuttings. But one major drawback is its autotoxicity: mature alfalfa releases chemicals into the soil that inhibit the germination of new alfalfa seedlings. This means attempts to “thicken up” an old stand with fresh alfalfa seed are unlikely to succeed. Typically, growers must rotate out of alfalfa for at least one to two years before replanting.

For producers with a thinning alfalfa stand, the options are either to rotate to a different crop or interseed with another species. Grass is the most common choice for interseeding, with species like orchardgrass, meadow brome, and fescue often used. While grasses help fill in the stand and maintain yield, they tend to lower overall protein content and bring additional risks like nitrate accumulation and endophyte toxicity.

Legumes offer another path, but many—including red and white clover—struggle to match alfalfa’s yield and persistence. That’s where sainfoin stands out. A non-bloating legume, sainfoin offers excellent forage quality and, importantly, is not affected by alfalfa’s autotoxicity. This makes it one of the few legumes that can be successfully interseeded into existing alfalfa fields.

Sainfoin yields 70–90% of what alfalfa does under irrigation and delivers crude protein levels of 18–20%, with digestibility similar to mid-bloom alfalfa. Its high tannin content prevents bloat and enhances protein utilization—especially valuable for producers who graze hayfields or feed green chop. These traits make sainfoin the closest equivalent to alfalfa when replanting alfalfa isn’t an option.

Sainfoin must be inoculated with its specific rhizobia strain and seeded at 20–30 pounds per acre when drilled. Good seed-to-soil contact is essential, and caution is needed to avoid damaging existing alfalfa crowns during seeding. Sainfoin prefers well-drained, calcareous soils and performs well in cold, semi-arid regions with moderate drought resistance.

A common challenge is buyer hesitation—sainfoin is less familiar than alfalfa, and some buyers may question its value. Producers can overcome this by providing forage analyses, feeding trial results, and direct comparisons with alfalfa. As more buyers understand its non-bloating, high-protein characteristics, sainfoin is gaining traction.

Sainfoin offers forage producers a unique tool to extend the life of an alfalfa field and maintain productivity without a full rotation. With proper management and market education, it can be a practical, profitable addition to Western hay systems.



Joseph Sagers, Extension Educator

Check out
our Face-
book Page



Stay Updated!

Jefferson County Extension
210 Courthouse House Way,
Ste. 180 Annex Building
208-745-6685
jefferson@uidaho.edu
Monday to Friday 9:00-5:00
Lunch from 1:00-2:00

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Get Fired Up!



It's a well known fact that food poisoning peaks in the summer months because warmer outdoor temperatures cause foodborne germs to flourish.

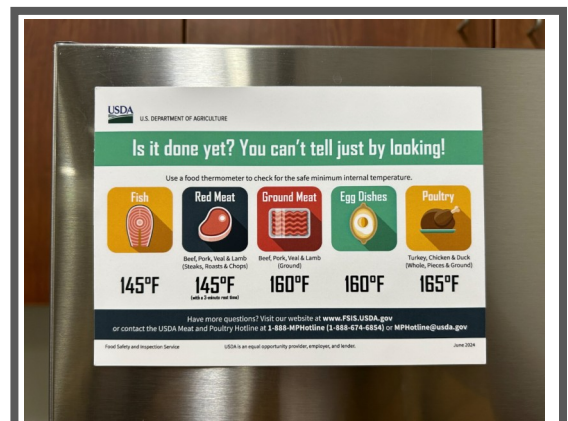
While you're firing up your grill and preparing those picnics, keep these food safety guidelines from *FightBack.org* in mind:

Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food.

- ⚙ **Always marinate foods in the refrigerator**, not on the counter or outdoors. Don't use sauce that was used to marinate raw meat or poultry on cooked food. Boil used marinade before applying to cooked food or reserve a portion of the unused marinade to use as a sauce.
- ⚙ When grilling foods, **preheat the coals on your grill** for 20-30 minutes, or until the coals are lightly coated with ash.
- ⚙ If you partially cook food in the microwave, oven or stove to reduce grilling time, do this step immediately before the food goes on the hot grill.
- ⚙ When it's time to grill the food, **cook it to a safe internal temperature**. Use a **food thermometer** to be sure. The food thermometer should be placed in the thickest part of the meat and should not be touching bone, fat, or gristle. Check the temperature in several places to make sure the food is evenly heated.
 - Beef, veal and lamb steaks and roasts: 145° F for medium rare and 160° F for medium.
 - Ground pork and ground beef: 160° F
 - Poultry: to at least 165° F.
 - Fin fish: 145° F or until the flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork.
 - Shrimp, lobster, crabs: the meat should be pearly and opaque.
 - Clams, oysters and mussels: Until the shells are open.
- ⚙ **Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs**. Be sure to have plenty of clean utensils and platters on hand.
- ⚙ **Grilled food can be kept hot** until serving by moving it to the side of the grill rack, just away from the coals to avoid overcooking.
- ⚙ **Never let raw meat, poultry, eggs, cooked food or cut fresh fruits or vegetables sit at room temperature for more than two hours before putting them in the refrigerator or freezer** (one hour when the temperature is above 90° F).

Check out [Grill Master](https://fightbac.org/grill-master/) <https://fightbac.org/grill-master/> and [Grilling and Food Safety](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/grilling-and-food-safety) <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/grilling-and-food-safety> for more insight!

Now that you know, fire up that grill and get cooking!



**Come visit us at the
Jefferson County Extension Office**
(210 Courthouse Way,
Suite 180, Rigby Idaho)
during regular business hours
and pick up a FREE magnet.
One per household.

Canning Series

*The following classes will be held at the
Jefferson County Extension Office.*

June 12th 6-9 pm, \$10

Canning High-Acid: Fruit Products

- Hands-On Jams & Jellies

July 22nd 6-9 pm, \$10

Canning Low-Acid: Vegetable Products

- Hands-On Carrots & Green Beans

August 21st 6-9 pm, \$10

Canning High-Acid: Pickled Products

- Hands-On Dilly Beans & Pickles

September 10th 6-9 pm, \$10

Canning Low-Acid: Soup Products

- Hands-On Vegetable Soup

October 17th, 6-9 pm, \$15

Canning Low-Acid: Meat Products

- Hands-On Chicken or Beef

To register, call our office
at (208) 745-6685,
scan the QR code,
or click the link here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/DyyiVyJu4k>

Deanna Poulsen
Jefferson County
FCS Extension Educator



Mud LakeMarket Sale

June 2, 6-8 pm - **Goat & Sheep Weigh-in**

Day Camp

Call the Office to get more info & to sign up!

June 3rd—Cloverbuds, Craft Sewing, & Woodburning

~Must have 5 participants per class signed up by May 23~

June 17—Cloverbuds, Quickbreads, & 3-D Pens

~Must have 5 participants per class signed up by June 6~

July 14—Cloverbuds, Weaving, & Canvas Art

~Must have 5 participants per class signed up by July 3~

Livestock Skills Day

June 30, 10:00 am - Noon
Mud Lake Fair Grounds

Counts for 2 club meetings

Rigby Market Sale Information

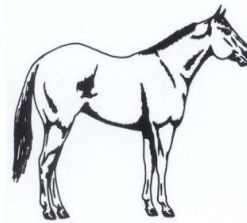
*~All youth must be registered on
jeffco.showandfair.com prior to weigh-ins~*

May 22, 6-6:30 pm - **Goat Weigh-in**

May 22, 6:30-8 pm - **Sheep Weigh-in**

July 1, 6-7 pm - **Rabbit Weigh-in**

**Market Rabbit pens must kindle and be declared between May 21 and June 14. Call the 4H office to declare kindling.*

**DISTRICT HORSE CONTEST**

June 16, 2025 at 8:00 am

Registration on zsuites under the calendar event

STATE DAIRY JUDGING CONTEST

June 27, 2025 at 9:00 am

Registration on zsuites under the calendar event

**Shooting Sports Info**

Record books Due : May 30

County Shotgun shoot: June 12

County Rifle Shoot: June 13

County Archery shoot: June 14

**IDAHO STATE TEEN ASSOCIATION CONVENTION (STAC)**

June 23-26, 2025

Registration opens April 15, on zsuites



Check out the camp packet on Zsuites.

Must sign up by June 13

\$80

**Alpine Horse Camp
July 8-11, 2025**

Registration Opens:
May 15-June 27

Visit Website: www.alpinehorsecamp.org

4-H GROWS HERE