

## SUPERMAN IS THE GREATEST

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When I was younger, I used to love reading comic books. I had a big box full of them, and would read them over and over. I would dig down to the bottom of the box to find ones that I hadn't read in a while. It was like finding hidden gems. The fantastic drawings coupled with incredible stories made it easy to develop the habit of reading. My parents encouraged it, even if they were considered "only comic books." They knew that reading was important, regardless of the format. It was exciting when my dad would bring home a new comic book for me.

Of all the different comics I read, the Superman issues were always my favorite. Superman was absolutely the boss. There was nothing he couldn't do. Fly, run fast, shoot lasers – the dude was invincible. Whatever you needed, Superman could seem to do it. It was hard to find a fault with him. I would guess that there are a lot of kids that felt the same as I did.

So here I am many years older. I don't read comic books any more, but I still have a fascination with things that accomplish almost superhuman things. In the field of forage crops, we have a plant that has superpowers. What is your problem? Fertilizer bill too high? BAM, this plant adds nitrogen to the soil. Hay quality not high enough? BANG, this plant can add protein and energy to your hay. Fescue toxicosis robbing you of weight gain? KAPOW, this plant reduces that problem. (I realize I am mixing my Superman and Batman references here.)

By now you probably realize that I am talking about clovers. But too often when we think about clovers we forgot all of the amazing things this group of plants can accomplish. They help solve some of the major issues we have in forage production. They add nitrogen to the soil through nitrogen fixation, they can increase the protein and energy content of the forage you grow, and they also reduce the losses caused by the tall fescue endophyte. Research has shown that, for our area, red and white clover do the best job in tall fescue pastures.

As a forage producer, one of the major goals of your operation should be to have a good stand of red and white clover. We are at a time of the year that you should be planting these in your tall fescue pastures and hayfields. The steps to planting clovers are pretty simple.

**When to plant:** The last two weeks of February are the best time. The grass is eaten down pretty low, and it isn't growing yet.

**What to plant:** We recommend two pounds of white clover and four pounds of red clover per acre. Planting both gives you a longer clover growing season.

**How to plant:** These seed can be broadcast on top of the ground. The lack of competition and adequate moisture will allow these seed to germinate quickly and become established. You can use a no-till drill to plant, but be careful of planting the seed to deep. You want to place seed no more than 1/8 inch deep.

**How often to plant:** If you get a good stand, replanting will only be needed about once every three years.

There are very few situations on a beef farm in which clovers want provide significant benefit. These supermen of the forage world will take your cut costs and improve your production. In short, they will take your forage program up, up, and away.

**Upcoming events:** We will be holding a tall fescue endophyte symposium on March 18 at MTREC in Spring Hill. We will have national experts discussing how to minimize the effect of the tall fescue endophyte, and how to use novel endophyte tall fescue varieties successfully. More information about the symposium and registration can be found at [UTBeef.com](http://UTBeef.com)