

University Farm News
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OUR LAND

Paul Burson, University Farm soil testing lab head, says farmers should consider it a privilege to seed legumes and grasses. A farmer has only about 30 productive years on a farm. During that time he gets only seven or eight chances to build up his soil with a legume when he follows a recommended 4-year corn-corn-grain-hay rotation.

Most of the land is flat where Conrad Mauland, Cottonwood, lives. He does have one sloping knoll of about 6 acres though, which he contoured last year at the suggestion of Jake Janzen, Soil Conservation Service farm planner. Both Mauland and Bob Gniffke, who picked the corn grown on the knoll, estimate the contouring produced an extra hundred bushels. Mauland said "it was noticeable how little soil washed down onto the lowland, compared to other years."

With labor and machinery costs likely to stay higher than farm product prices, this looks like a good time to swing toward livestock and forage crops. M.L. Armour, University Farm Extension agronomist, points out that the livestock farmer can (1) shift from intensive row crops to pasture and hay easily; (2) livestock, not man-hours, can be used to harvest the crops. Even though some forage crops must be manually harvested, more total digestible nutrients may be produced per hour of labor than from corn, oats, wheat or barley.

In addition to all this, good forage crops decrease soil erosion, build nitrogen reserves and increase yields of following crops.

Q: Do soil conservation district supervisors receive a salary?

A: No. They receive three dollars per meeting attended and six cents per mile on official business of the district.