

# Oats Popular this Spring

**Dana Zook:** [00:00:00] Welcome back to the Extension Experience Podcast. I'm Dana Zook.

Josh Bushong. And Alberto Amador.

This week we came together to discuss the details of using oats as a spring forage crop. So we're just going to dive right in. Josh, you mentioned several weeks ago that many producers in northwest Oklahoma are considering planting oats this spring.

So why don't you tell us a little bit about the situation?

**Josh Bushong:** Well, like you said, we got some Farms that, for whatever reason, didn't get their wheat in, so we have some open fields, but also some farms that were just looking at something different. And acres on oats have been kind of up and up. Just looking at some NASS data.

Usually most of our oats grown in Oklahoma are grown for forage. Maybe 10 percent of the 80 to 140 thousand acres we grow is pretty much all. Like I said, 10 percent grown for grain, but so we're using it as a forage crop. It's grown some popularity because it is quick and it's great [00:01:00] palatability, great quality .

**Dana Zook:** So we've got some guys that have never grown it and some guys have been growing it for a while . The year that we had last fall. We didn't get as much wheat in, or the wheat pasture that we wanted, so we're looking for some pasture to graze this spring, and here quick in a hurry.

We were talking in the hallway the other day over our coffee . And you said something about spring oats are not the same as spring planted oats.

**Dana Zook:** I thought it would be a good discussion.

**Josh Bushong:** So, to back up, it is a cool season grass. Just like most of the winter wheat we grow around here. But we do have winter types and summer types. So, just saying spring oats can be a little confusing because We can plant both spring and winter oats in the spring here, so.

So,

**Dana Zook:** so like what you would see in like a cover crop, a cover crop mix, like that you would plant in the fall, is that the same type of seed that you would see planted in the spring?

**Josh Bushong:** Like I said, we can plant both, spring and winter, in the spring, so. You're not going to be distinct here. [00:02:00] Like I said, most of us just say spring oats and we get whatever we can get.

Like I said, we can grow winter oats planted in the spring and still have forage to play around with, so.

**Dana Zook:** It's like a short season forage crop. Yeah. Okay, very good. So these oats are for hay, primarily, but we have looked at some numbers that potentially could use them as a grazing crop, as a bridge, if you don't have a lot of wheat pasture to get you to your standing grass in the summer.

Alberto, in preparation for questions for producers, you have been providing some of our extension educators with budgeting on oats planted this spring. So what would you say that a producer can expect to make on a hay crop when he uses the oats for a hay crop?

**Alberto Amador:** It's a really good question. Well, the expected cost in West Oklahoma for hay is \$164, [00:03:00] and according to my calculations, the profit about return variable cost is 54 dollars. On the other hand, for grazing the cost per acre is 109, and the returns about variable cost in the 60 day grazing period is 65 dollars.

**Dana Zook:** So 65 versus, what did you say before? 54. 54. So that's a pretty, pretty even amount there. So it's kind of a wash. So Josh, what would you say about that budget? What are, what are some differences that we looked at as far as that goes?

**Josh Bushong:** Yeah. I don't like that. Alberto was saying there's, there's. Money to get a crop, whether you're going to graze it or hay it, and for the prices that we're putting into that crop, a lot of it's going to be the same, like the seed, fertilizer, and stuff like that, and getting the crop off and going, [00:04:00] which in our budgets, Alberto is using, we use two bushel seeding rate, and if you've never held oats.

They're pretty light. They're 32 pounds per bushel And so a two bushel we want guys plant two three bushels, but at two bushels You're looking at maybe 25 bucks in seed And then the fertilizer we like to see guys for cool season grasses,

but at least 50 60 pounds of actual nitrogen out there And so that's getting us 30 something dollars in fertility plus application and getting the crops sown in.

That's where a lot of our crops, or most, most of the crops, hay crops and the grazing crops are the same, but then we have a big difference in the haying. So that we can show, haying oats make you a lot of money, but also cost more because that significant portion of that budget, like Alberto said Almost 70 of it's going to be tied up and just harvested in that crop for hay.

**Dana Zook:** Yeah. And of course these numbers will vary. Okay. You know, this isn't gospel, [00:05:00] but does bring an option for producers who may need that this spring.

**Josh Bushong:** Yep. So like I said, our wheat pasture is not looking great. We've gotten a little moisture here lately, but some guys are looking for more pasture, especially if they're already got some cattle on hand.

Looking for more pasture to graze, this might be a way to get us a couple months more grazing out of it. Or if you just have open field, it might be an excellent hay crop to make off of it as well.

**Dana Zook:** And then it would be off in time if you wanted to do some sort of summer situation.

**Josh Bushong:** Yep. A lot of guys like you said in our cover crop mixes are throwing oats in there.

So it's excellent. If you're already looking at cover crops, we like to see that get at least to maturity because we'll get that, more benefits out of that residue in the next crop. But following it up with the summer crops, another excellent opportunity to get something else out there. But as far as planting date goes, we're looking at, you know, here mid February to mid March.

And so we start pushing March into April, then we might start looking at some other forage options, a lot of hay grazer or feed crops out there we can start looking at. But here real [00:06:00] soon, like I said, mid February to mid March, spring oats are pretty hard to beat.

**Dana Zook:** And Josh, you said that maybe some of our research from Oklahoma State.

Says that maybe the earlier planted oats will provide more volume, more forage production. Is that correct?

**Josh Bushong:** Just like any day set, it's always depends on the year. Right. Weather conditions in Oklahoma very variable from spring to spring, but ideally the The sooner we plant, the more forage we can grow.

So depending on the year, we might be looking at two or three, four tons per acre, but most of the time we're looking at that maybe a ton and a half, two tons for most of Western Oklahoma. And that earlier planting date, those who start getting later and later, we might lose 500, a thousand pounds off that yield goal.

So plant accordingly, you know, your ground, what might. produce forage wise and fertilize accordingly because nitrogen is based on how much tons we're predicting for yield goals. So .

**Dana Zook:** Well, the groundhog saw his shadow the other day, so that means there's six more weeks [00:07:00] of winter. I don't know. Is that agronomic, Josh?

**Josh Bushong:** It is agronomic, but in Oklahoma, we went from, what, 60 to 30 degrees overnight the other day. So yeah just wait another day. We warm up really quick and we get colder really quick.

So we'll see what kind of spring we get.

**Dana Zook:** Yeah. So hopefully that gives you some, some numbers to go off of. Of course, you can reach out to us at the area extension office to get some ideas or more insight or details on the budget, reach out to our County offices and they can get in contact with us to help you with that.

Thanks guys for joining me. Thanks listeners for joining us and have a wonderful week.