

## **Nitrate Sampling of Forages**

When cereal grains are grown under stressful conditions these crops can accumulate high levels of nitrate that are toxic to livestock and can be very costly. The free Nitrate QuikTest that is available through our Extension Office will tell you if Nitrate is present or not and will give you some idea of level. To have a quantitative Nitrate level we can send in samples to the Forage lab at Montana State University. There is a \$15.00 (subject to change) fee for the quantitative test.

The best time to sample forages for Nitrate levels is before the forage is cut. Nitrate levels fluctuate during the day with the nitrate level being the highest in the morning. Please sample your field at approximately the same time you intend to cut it or first thing in the morning. We will test the lowest leafing juncture or node on the plant. Cut the sample plants directly at the ground level or bring in the entire plant. We suggest getting samples from a number of different locations in the field and label each sample. Pay extra attention to any portion of the field that may not receive as much water, has been stressed for some reason, or has a difference in soil type than the rest. Depending on the result of the nitrate test you may want to cut and bale some sections separately.