

Grazing Cover Crops: Lessons Learned

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Introduction

Grazing cover crops is an option for producers having crop and livestock operations. We wanted to know if cover crops provided good fall and winter grazing; and what issues grazing cover crops may create.



Results and Discussion

Seeding

- Earlier is Better
- Rain? Within 3 to 5 Days of Seeding
- Aerial Seeding works in Standing Corn
- Sowing after Bean Harvest is Risky

Grazing

- Good Gains are Achievable – 2+ lbs/day
- Pull Animals in March
- If Cover Crops are for Weed Control, Don't Overgraze
- Early Seeding Maximizes Fall Forage



Results and Discussion Concluded

Termination

- Earlier May Be Better
- If Too Late, Plant then Roll
- Residue Seems to Delay Emergence/ Germination
- Can Get Volunteer Cover Crop if Terminate Too Late
- Make Hay – Good Option for Cereal Cover Crops

Experimental Procedure

We grazed cattle on 200-300 acres on a cooperating farmer's fields and goats on research plots at Lincoln University. The lessons learned are the result of two years of observation.



Conclusions

Grazing cover crops is an effective means of carrying livestock through fall and winter months. Weight gains of cattle grazing cover crops can be impressive. Termination management is important for follow-on crops. Resting permanent pastures may provide intangible benefits.

Acknowledgements: This research was supported by funding from NRCS and the cooperation of Forck Farms.