

# Managing Cover Crops in the Spring



*Responsible People  
in a Proactive Industry*



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# Grower's Perspective

- Important management step
- Just one part of their cropping system
- Understand the challenge at hand

# Dealer's Perspective

- Understands the challenge at hand
- “What a pain in the.....”
- Another piece of the equation?
- Concerned with residual effects of not getting timely control / eradication / cutting
  - Agronomic & Overall Image
  - Ultimately, cover crops not managed today become a weed tomorrow!

# Ryegrass vs. Cereal Rye

- Ryegrass: *Lolium multiflorum*
  - cereal rye: *Secale cereale*
- 2 types of annual ryegrass
  - Italian annual ryegrass - NOT a valid cover crop option
    - Developed from the Mediterranean & bred for biennial habit
    - Spring plantings result in first year growth w/ no heading; will survive winter and set seed the following spring
  - Westerwold diploid annual ryegrass
    - Developed in the Netherlands - a true winter annual
    - Sets seed in late spring
    - This has been crossbred w/ Italian types

# Annual Ryegrass

- Imperative to help growers realize what they need to buy or what they might already have
- Seed producers may not keep genetics pure
- Cleanliness is HUGE part of cover crop industry
  - Use only suppliers that know the genetics
    - Over 170 different varieties
    - Large variation in emergence and establishment between varieties
    - Blends of varieties is common too

# Annual Ryegrass

- Issues with control has decreased recent use
- Timing is CRITICAL – a challenge for the dealer
- Nitrogen tie-up a major concern
- Still, benefits of using ryegrass will demand increased awareness
  
- Forage option too – boot to flowering (good quality and great tonnage)

# Annual Ryegrass

- **Plan early** (and maybe plan on 2 applications)
  - Much easier to kill before it joints
    - Could be 4" to 14"
    - Date of jointing varies along with location and season
- Glyphosate products require translocation of 4 hours before sunset
- **Early control**
  - Maximizes nitrogen release and decomposition rate
  - Makes easier planting, conserves moisture
- Boot stage is terrible time to spray, but applications at flowering work much better (even though viable seed may be viable)

# Annual Ryegrass

- Other factors....
  - Sunny
  - Above 50 degree temperatures
  - Cold weather means only spraying morning to early afternoon (night temps < 40)
  - Wait at least 2 days after freezing weather
  - Use additives (AMS)
  - 10 gallons water/ acre for glyphosate



# Mix options for Annual Ryegrass

- NEVER mix triazines w/ glyphosate
- Herbicides that have been working (to mix):
  - Resolve Q
  - Sharpen (late)
  - Corvus
  - 2,4-D
  - Select Max – warm temperatures
- Fixing it after not working the first time (Plumer)
  - Don't respray glyphosate (poor translocation)
  - Full rate of Gramoxone (30 gallon water), maybe Basis Blend
  - Follow-up spray in 2-3 weeks if needed when weather is warmer
    - Select, Accent, SteadfastQ, (with the full additive package)

# Plumer – How to fail in Annual Ryegrass Control

- Spray in afternoon with cold or cloudy weather
- Use AI nozzles with coarse droplets
- Use AMS substitute product
- Use 15-20 gallons of water per acre
- Dump glyphosate in before AMS
- Mix other herbicides with glyphosate

# Cereal Grains

- Cereal Rye – very hardy & fast growing
- Kill early – less N tie-up, conserve water
- Tillage – usually eliminates regrowth
- Mowing – wait until has began flowering (sickle mower over a flail mower)
- 2' tall rye – roller, stalk chopper or crimper
- Quicker cash crop regrowth when rye is left standing – warmer soils (but C:N concerns)

# Cereal Grains – for Spring Forage

- **Wheat** – Higher in quality than rye, triticale, and oats, but not barley. Produces more dry matter than barley.
  - BEST USE – Spring Pasture; Silage (boot to dough stage); Hay (boot to milk stage)
- **Cereal Rye** – Rye offers the greatest production for hay or pasture ground because of its quick growth in the spring.
  - BEST USE – Spring Pasture
- **Fall Triticale** – Triticale is best suited for grazing pasture. Because of large stems, hay wilting & silage packing is difficult.
  - BEST USE – Spring Pasture; Silage & Hay (boot to dough stage)
- **Winter Barley** – Barley's value as a silage crop is comparable to whole-plant corn.
  - BEST USE – Silage & Hay (boot to dough stage)

# Legumes

- Crimson clover – will not nodulate until spring (N stored in top growth) – control issues
  - Single taproot makes control easy mechanically
  - Full bloom = greatest N – still easy with roller, chopper
- Winter Peas
  - Close mowing in spring will demolish peas (but mow before full bloom to prevent reseeding)
  - Several herbicide options
  - Vines become greasy if winterkilled (plant with a cereal to reduce matting and improve winter protection)
  - Forage harvest (pods are well formed)

# Legumes

- Hairy Vetch – can be a bear
  - Close mowing or light disc will control
  - Glyphosate alone doesn't work well
  - PGR (2,4-D, dicamba) work well – corn planting delay
  - Gramoxone, 2,4-D lessen planting delay
  - Watch out for hair-pinning in seed slot
  - Tillage – tough (mow first or imperative to use lead coulters)
  - Hard seed (as much as 25%) – use 1 every 2-3 years

# Brassicas

- Radish & turnips require little to no management in the spring
- Escapes are easily controlled in spring (many herbicides, flair mowing, or light tillage)
- Terminate before flowering – rolling offers control if they are flowered
- Rapeseed probably the toughest to control with glyphosate (requires higher rates and/or mixes with Gramoxone, 2,4-D)

# GET INVOLVED EARLY!

- Get your growers game plan and expectation
- Makes for less surprises “in season”
- You might be surprised of other opportunities that present themselves



# THANK YOU!

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