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Small
Grains
NEWS
April 2020

Greetings,

These may be unprecedented times, but the seasons march on and planting season has already begun for those with small grains in the rotation. The timing of the COVID-19 crisis and its effect on the marketplace hasn't left farmers much room to change cropping plans. **One tweak that is still possible is to keep a rye or wheat cover crop for livestock feed or your own cover crop seed production instead of planting corn or beans.** I've included some resources below on this topic.

If you're adapting to these times with strategies like planting whole fields to cover crops this year; keeping cover crop rye or wheat and harvesting it; or trying out other field crops (sunflowers? field peas? millet? dry beans?) **be sure to use the hashtag #practicalresilience when you share these stories on social media.**

Good Luck Planting,

Alisha

Keeping a Rye or Wheat Cover Crop for Market

If you are looking at your cover crop and thinking that it would be a shame to kill it to plant corn or beans given what you've penciled out for profits this year, you could **consider keeping some of that wheat, rye or triticale to take to harvest.** These grains can be used for:

- Nutritious silage or forage for livestock
- Cover crop seed for this fall on your own farm (and your neighbors'?)
- Wheat grain sales - remember [Smithfield Grain](#) is buying wheat at Allerton and Davis City locations and [Grain Millers](#) in St. Angsar buys wheat, rye and triticale for milling
- Don't forget to factor in the [value of the straw](#)! Straw markets include livestock bedding or Iowa DOT mulch



Picking your best cover crop fields with uniform stands and the earliest planting date to save will be key to success. Reference these resources from PFI farmers on

pivoting a cover crop into a cash crop:

- Blog on [assessing rye and wheat stands in spring](#) for production potential
- Blog on [pivoting rye cover crop to rye seed production](#)

Feeding Small Grains to Livestock - New Blog from April 5 Call on Hybrid Rye Trial for Hogs

On our April shared learning call, Tom Frantzen shared results from his on-farm research which showed **equivalent weight gains in his organic grow-finish hogs when 50% of the corn in his ration was replaced with hybrid rye.** [Read that blog here.](#)

Small grains are lower-input crops and are therefore less expensive to produce than corn or soybeans. **This may make small grains an attractive option for filling feed bins for your livestock this year.** These resources may help you weigh this option:

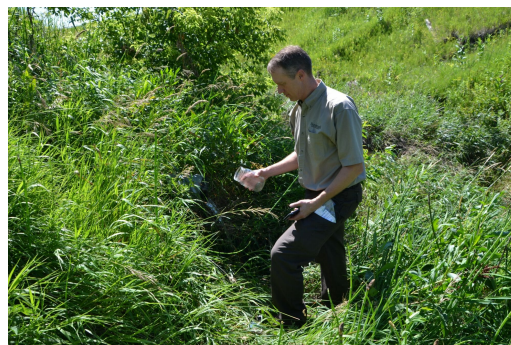


- [Infographic on small grains inclusion rates](#) for the various livestock species
- This blog on [milling small grains for livestock feed](#)
- Individual blogs on feeding pigs [barley](#), [oats](#), [rye](#), [triticale](#), and [wheat](#)

April Hybrid Rye Feeding Trial Blog

Tile Water Sampling Opportunity for Small Grains Growers

We still have a few spots left in our partner program with Iowa Soybean Association to take samples from tiles under small grains crops to test for nitrate and phosphorous concentrations. **To participate you have to have a field where the entire area that drains into the tile is beneath a small-grain crop and the tile outlet has to be accessible so you can collect samples.** If you have a sampling location that meets these specifications, you would receive a kit with sampling bottles, take samples every other week (2x per month) from April - September, freeze the samples and then mail all of them in for analysis. The following winter you would receive a report with your results.



If you're interested in learning more or getting involved contact rebecca@practicalfarmers.org as soon as possible - tiles have already been running this year!

Neighbor Loaves Program Bolsters Local Grain Markets, Bakeries while Aiding Families in Need

[Neighbor Loaves](#) is a program launched by Midwest-based Artisan Grain Collaborative that supports farmers, millers, bakers, and eaters by promoting the sale and community

distribution of locally grown and produced bread. The program allows the public to purchase loaves that are made with at least 50% locally sourced flour that are then donated to food pantries and other food relief organizations.

To get involved you can:

- Purchase [neighbor loaves](#) via a participating bakery
- Share this opportunity with bakeries in your local communities to see if they would like to produce neighbor loaves. Interested bakers can find instructions on how to sign up [here](#). And check out this [list of resources](#) to find local grain and flour in the Upper Midwest.
- If you are a miller who produces flour from Midwest-grown wheat and other small grains and would like to sell flour to bakers in the neighbor loaves program, send an email to info@graincollaborative.com.



If you are a farmer who is interested in getting involved in producing wheat for local mills and bakeries, please contact alisha@practicalfarmers.org.

EVENTS

April

Virtual Field Day: Farming for the Future with Cover Crops, Extended Rotations and More!

April 24, 2020 1 p.m. | <https://iastate.zoom.us/j/315189792>

***** No Shared Learning Calls in May & June - Good luck planting! *****

IN THE FIELD

Achieving Desired Plant Populations

Start the year out right by treating your small grains like a cash crop! Target plant population is ~1.1 million seeds/acre for most small grains. Here are some resources about how to calibrate your grain drill for small grains:

1. The [drill calibration and plant population episode](#) of our rotationally raised video series.
2. The [planting rates short](#) from our rotationally raised video series.



Seed to Soil Contact

Small grains are big babies when it comes to coping with uneven planting depths. Make sure you're set up for success through seed bed prep or appropriate no-till equipment.

1. [Episode 5 of our rotationally raised video series](#) focuses on seed bed

preparation and achieving target population and stand for small grains.



Be Ready to Fertilize

The optimal time to apply fertilizer to small grains to avoid lodging is before planting or shortly after. Make sure you're ready to apply fertilizer at the right time.

1. The [fertilizing small grains](#) short from our rotationally raised video series.
2. The blog from [March 2017's shared learning call](#) with agronomists on optimal fertilizer strategies.
3. The blog from [June 2017's shared learning call](#) on Mark Ditlevson's fertilizer timing and rates.
4. University of Minnesota's [oat fertilizer recommendations](#).
5. The [blog on Small Grain Fertility](#) from Dr. Dave Franzen's February 2020 call



Scouting and Disease Management

Maintaining yields and achieving market specifications like test weight or germination depend upon successful management of small grains diseases:

1. [Scouting and Disease Management Blog](#) from April 2019 shared learning call.
2. The [disease management episode](#) of our rotationally raised video series.



STAY CONNECTED



Looking for more? Contact us today!

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