
Practical Cover Cropper - Three farmers share a cover crop update + Cereal rye resources

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Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Farmers reflect on their 2024 cover crop seeding experience

The cover crop planting season has wound down. We asked three farmers to update PFI on how their cover crop seeding went this year:

Keith Ripplinger of Holdingford, Minnesota, planted his cover crops using three methods. Before this year, he worked his fields with a cultivator, drilled the seed in and finished by going across the fields with a roller. This year, he

used different seeding methods in response to the field conditions. He used a Haybuster 107c to no-till drill on some rocky ground that had washout issues. He seeded with a drone where the fields were too wet to get into without causing damage to the not-yet-harvested wheat crop. Lastly, after harvesting a field of spring wheat, he tilled the field and then drilled in his cover crop. The tilling was due to 4-to-6-foot water hemp coming through that he didn't want to overtake his field.

With all three methods, kale and turnips were planted at two pounds per acre. He prefers to have his 50 acres of cover crops seeded by mid-August.

Jim Peschong of Lincoln, Nebraska, used an integrated Kinze Planter to plant cereal rye in 15-foot rows at 60 pounds per acre on 109 acres. In the past, he has rented a drill to seed his cover crops, which added cost with the rental and fuel. At 20 feet wide, his planter is twice the width of the rental drill, so it takes less fuel and less time. He plants the rye immediately following harvest.

Dan Dietz of Nashua, Iowa, used a drill, a drone and an air fertilizer to seed his cover crops this year. In August, he used a drone to plant 135 acres of cereal rye. After harvest, he used his 7.5-foot drill to seed rye on another 135 acres. On his remaining acres, he applied rye seed mixed in with his dry fertilizer using his air fertilizer.

In the past, he has used an airplane, but the coverage isn't always what he needs for his goal of weed control. He has also drilled 600 acres in the past, but that method was time-intensive.

His rate of application varies from 60 to 80 pounds per acre for rye as a cover crop. If he wants to harvest the rye for seed the rate increases to 120 to 130 pounds per acre.

After his rye was harvested for seed this summer, he planted radishes and turnips at a rate of 15 pounds per acre. Dan applied manure as a fertilizer, and the radishes and turnips were three feet high as of Oct. 31.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Join us at PFI's Annual Conference



We hope to see you at our 2025 Annual Conference, taking place Jan. 10-11, at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines, Iowa.

Choose from **three preconference short courses**, as well as over 70 farmer-led sessions, exhibitors, locally sourced meals and more throughout the conference.

Find out more information and register today.

Open calls for on-farm research



Are you ready to put your soil health to the test with on-farm research?

We are currently seeking participants for two on-farm research trials. Both trials are compensated.

- Can We Reduce N Rates to Corn and Improve ROI?
- Do Cover Crops Increase the Number of Days Suitable for Field Work?

Enroll in on-farm research today.

Get a second opinion on your nitrogen rate while safeguarding your revenue



Are you looking to save inputs on your corn crop?

The N Rate Risk Protection Program is a free-to-participate program that helps you to reduce risk as you reduce nitrogen expenses – saving you money and increasing your farm’s resiliency.

Risk protection is provided in the form of a \$35 per acre payment if a yield loss occurs from reducing your typical nitrogen rate.

[Check to see if you are eligible and sign up.](#)

IN THE FIELD

Multiple years of nitrogen findings



During the 2021-2022 growing season, sixteen corn farmers performed 17 replicated strip trials testing their typical nitrogen rate against that rate reduced by 15-45%. **[Read the report.](#)**

Building on those trials in 2022-2023, nineteen farmers performed replicated strip trials testing their typical nitrogen rate against that rate reduced by the amount of their choosing. **[Read the report.](#)**

Explore more PFI **[resources on reducing](#)** nitrogen rates.

Research report: "Does Repeated Use of a Cereal Rye Cover Crop Reduce the Need for N Fertilizer for Corn?"



In 2019 **Jack Boyer** tested his normal and a reduced rate of nitrogen on a corn crop planted in a field following multiple years of cover cropping.

Jack was able to maintain corn yields while reducing input costs and improving return on investment.

[Explore the trial results.](#)

Additional resources

- Blog post from Iowa Soybean Association: ["Why Long-Term Cover Crops Show Promise"](#)
- Blog post from Iowa Soybean Association: ["Winter Precipitation Forecast"](#)
- Minnesota Corn Podcast Episode: ["Integrating Manure and Cover Crops"](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Preconference short course: "Extending the Rotation: Finding an Effective Third Crop"



Are you a little bored with only corn and beans? Curious how to work in a bit of something else? This short course will look at several crops for extended rotations and the feasibility of growing and marketing them in the Midwest.

Farmers and researchers will explore the following crops with short course attendees: millet, rye, oats, buckwheat and oilseeds.

[Learn more and register.](#)

Save the date: 2025 Midwest Covers and Grains Conference



Save the date for the **2025 Midwest Covers and Grains Conference**.

It will take place on **Wednesday, March 5 in Baraboo, Wisconsin**, at the Great Wolf Lodge, so make it a family outing.

Registration will open in mid-December.

Upcoming PFI events

All events listed are in Central time.

Dec. 14: Meet-Up – Field Crop Farmer Meet-Up

5-7 p.m. | Decorah, IA

Friends of PFI events

Dec. 11-12: Conference – Integrated Crop Management Conference

*Hosted by: Iowa State University Extension and Outreach
Altoona, IA*

***Visit PFI staff at this event**

Dec. 17-18: Conference – Wisconsin Water and Soil Health Conference

*Hosted by: University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension
Wisconsin Dells, WI*

***Visit PFI staff at this event**

Jan. 7-10: Conference – 33rd Annual National No-Tillage Conference

*Hosted by: No-Till Farmer
Louisville, KY*

Jan. 29-30: Conference – Soil Management Summit

*Hosted by: University of Minnesota Extension
Mankato, MN*

***Visit PFI staff at this event**

[View our events calendar](#)

Contact our team

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Chat with our cover crops team by calling the PFI office at (515)-232-5661.

Donate today

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