
Practical Cover Cropper - Seeding cereal rye in drought conditions + Late season field days

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Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Seeding cereal rye in drought conditions

Most of the Midwest is experiencing drought conditions. How does this affect the planting of cover crops? We contacted PFI member **Wade Dooley** to see

how he handles planting cover crops in dry conditions. Here are some of the ways Wade is adjusting to the current conditions in the field:

- Wade maxes out his drill's down pressure to cut in, even with new disk openers.
- He is planting deeper than normal to protect the rye from sprouting and withering in too light of a rain. His current no-till planting depth is 1 ¾ inches, whereas in a year with more moisture in the ground, it is at 1 ¼ inches.
- He is also increasing his seeding rate, partly due to the time of year and to allow for seedling loss due to stressful conditions. He is planting at a rate of 1.5 bushels per acre, whereas he normally plants at 1.25 bushels per acre. If you want lots of biomass in the spring, you can go higher.

Changing the way cover crops are planted in dry conditions will help, but delayed germination will result in reduced fall biomass. It's not a perfect fall, so don't expect perfect performance.

According to Wade, "It's up to us to get them out there in the ground, and Mother Nature will do the rest."

PROGRAM UPDATES

Registration is open for the 2025 PFI Annual Conference



We hope to see you at our **2025 Annual Conference**, Jan. 10-11, at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines, Iowa. There are three pre-conference short courses to sign up for, as well as over 70 farmer-led sessions on a wide variety of agricultural topics, exhibitors, locally sourced meals and so much more.

Register before Dec. 6 for a chance to win two free nights at the Hilton in Des Moines during the conference.

Crop insurance discount program



The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship will provide up to \$5 per acre for cover crops for eligible applicants.

Farmers are encouraged to wait to apply until their cover crop seeding has been completed.

Sign-up begins Monday, Dec. 2, 2024.

Iowa NRCS sets Nov. 22 cutoff for conservation program applications



The first application cutoff for Iowa farmers and other private landowners to apply for funding of conservation practices in fiscal year 2025 through USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service programs is Nov. 22. This includes the following programs:

- **Conservation Stewardship Program**
- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**
- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program**

IN THE FIELD

Is it too late to plant cover crops?



From 2018 and 2019, PFI member **Wade Dooley** drilled rye into an 80-acre field in quarter-mile-long strips at one bushel per acre during nearly every month of the year.

He found mid-fall plantings work best.

Read [this blog](#) from 2020 to see more advice from Wade.

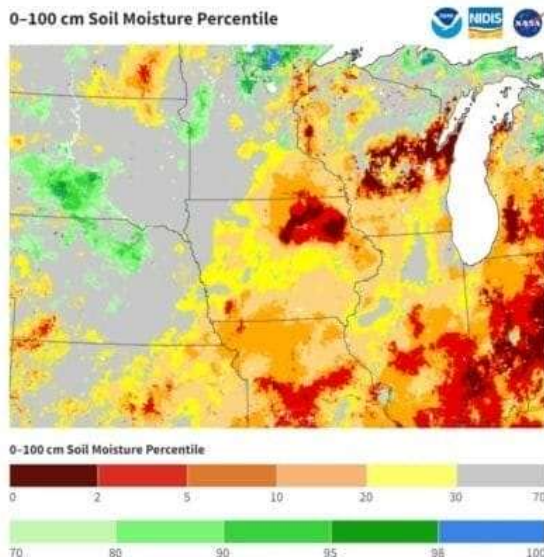
Comparing cereal rye seeding dates and rates in corn



In this research report from 2020, PFI cooperators compared the effects of planting a cereal rye cover crop earlier and reducing the seeding rate from 55 pounds per acre to 28 pounds per acre. The farmer researchers looked at cover crop performance, soil health and the impact on the following corn crop.

[Read what these seven PFI farmers discovered](#) about different seeding dates in the first year and second year of the trial.

Changing cover crop plans in drought conditions



Last year was another dry cover cropping season, presenting planting challenges.

Read this blog from Dr. Mark Licht of Iowa State Extension on ways to approach planting cover crops in a time of drought.

Additional resources

- Blog: **Comparing the Profitability of Corn – Soybean vs. Extended Rotation: Introducing the “Crop Rotation Analyzer” Tool**
- ISU Extension Blog: **Beware of Dry Conditions When Soil Sampling and Interpreting Test Results**
- **U.S. Drought Monitor**
- Green Cover Blog: **Why Plant Cereal Rye in a Drought**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Field day: "A Farmer's Soil Health Journey: No-Till Cover Crop Synergies"



Thursday, Nov. 21 | 9-11:30 a.m. | Plainfield, IA

Keith Lovrien operates a soybean and corn operation in Northeast Iowa. Keith has been using no-till practices for over 30 years and decided to add cover crops to his operation eight years ago.

Hear about the data he has collected over the years on soil health and the financials of cover crops. **RSVP for this field day.**

Field day: "Reading Between the Aggregates: What Your Soil Can Tell You About Farm Management"



Wednesday, Dec. 4 | 4-6 p.m. |
Hopkinton, IA

Ryan and Kristy Gibbs run a diverse farming operation in Hopkinton, Iowa. During this hands-on field day, you will learn how to read a soil test and apply this knowledge to make soil health and farm management decisions.

Ryan will share his yield findings on corn planted into cover crops using strip-till and no-till. [RSVP for this field day.](#)

Friends of PFI events

All events listed in Central time.

Nov 12: Field Day – [Field Walk Series: Reduced-Till Organic Corn](#)

Hosted by: The Rodale Institute
10 a.m. | McLean, NE

Nov 19: Conference – [Central Nebraska Regenerative Ag Conference](#)

Hosted by: Central Community College
8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. | Holdredge, NE

Dec 3-4: Conference – [Southeast Kansas Soil Health Conference](#)

Hosted by: Green Cover
Iola, KS

Dec 11-12: Conference – [Integrated Crop Management Conference](#)

Nov 13: Webinar – [Many Little Hammers: A Multitactical Approach to Managing Weeds in Your Cropping System](#)

Hosted by: The Rodale Institute
1-2 p.m. | Online

Nov 20: Field Day – [Strip-till, Cover Crop and Relay Intercropping Field Day](#)

Hosted by: Iowa Learning Farms and Humboldt County SWCD
10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. | Gilmore City, IA

***Visit PFI at this event**

Dec 9-11: Conference – [The Big Soil Health Event](#)

Hosted By: Soil Regen
Cedar Falls, IA

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

Contact our team

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

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