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Cereal Rye Seeding

As cover cropping systems have evolved, cereal rye has become increasingly popular. The benefits it provides for everything from erosion control to grazing days to weed suppression make it one of the more versatile ones available.

With any luck, your cereal rye is planted. Work out of Wisconsin showing the benefits of early planting on weed suppression would suggest planting early and increasing biomass production is a good thing. If not, and you're still hoping to get some cereal rye seeded, the 'optimum' window is starting to close. Early November is typically the end of the seeding window, but you can find county specific information using the Midwest Cover Crops Council Cover Crop Selector Tool at <http://mccc.msu.edu/selector-tool/>.

At that same site, you'll also find recommendations for seeding (drilled/broadcast/aerial) rates. A 55-60 pound per acre seeding rate drilled at three quarters to an inch and a half deep is typically best for our area. As we move later into the seeding window or use other seeding methods, rates should be increased. *Note: if participating in USDA-NRCS or other cost share programs, be sure to follow recommendations to keep you eligible for program benefits.* Even if you do all of the above, stands aren't always perfectly uniform. Various issues can affect germination and emergence. Two of the largest this fall will likely be moisture – which we can't do much about – and previous herbicide programs.

While fall-seeded rye can typically establish well following most corn herbicides, there are exceptions based on chemical characteristics of the herbicide, weather, etc.... If in doubt, consult product labels and follow provided instructions. A recent article in the KSU Agronomy eUpdate (<https://eupdate.agronomy.ksu.edu/article/cover-crop-response-to-herbicides-612-3>) also provides a good summary of herbicide injury likelihood during establishment for a number of commonly used active ingredients. Recommendations are a conservative estimate based on field research and herbicide label recommendations. Results may vary. If in doubt, consider a field bioassay to determine crop response to potential herbicide residues.

Even if the cereal rye establishes well, there may be grazing restrictions based on previous herbicide use to contend with as well. For example, herbicides containing acetochlor, dimethenamid, and pyroxasulfone have little potential for cover crop injury but may contain herbicide residues if grazed. As with use of any herbicide program, always read and follow label directions keeping in mind potential cost share program restrictions as well.

Next week: what can cereal rye provide for weed suppression?