

Planting Forages Following Wheat

Once your wheat is combined, how do you plan to use that ground after harvest? Maybe there are forage possibilities.

Nearly every year at this time I talk about forages that can be planted into wheat stubble for hay, silage, or grazing. Double cropping a forage is especially valuable this year as we try to rebuild feed reserves that were exhausted this spring following last year's drought and the slow early growth this spring.

Today is going to be no different except I also have a warning. The warning is that seed of these forages is hard to find. Cover crops last fall, spring forage plantings, and now prevented planting choices in some states has used most of our usual forage seeds. So don't be afraid to experiment and try something new.

Typically, we might plant an early maturing corn or a forage sorghum to chop for silage. If these seeds aren't available, maybe a short-season sunflower will work for silage. They survive light frost and yield well under many conditions.

For double-crop hay, sorghum-sudan hybrids, pearl millet or foxtail millet tend to be our first choices. A good alternative is solid-seeded soybeans. Also consider planting bin-run corn very thick so stems aren't so heavy and hard to cut and dry. Oats or other spring small grains planted in early August is another option.

Definitely consider turnips and other brassicas, as well as oats, for fall pasture planted into wheat stubble in late July or early August. With a few timely rains, they will produce much high quality feed in a short time. And, they can be less expensive to plant.

Don't automatically let your wheat ground sit idle the rest of the year, especially if you could use more forage. When moisture is available, there are many forage options. One might be right for you.

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