

June 26, 2017

SUCCESSFULLY SEEDING FORAGES INTO WHEAT STUBBLE

What is the most important step in double-cropping forages after wheat harvest? If you answered – getting a good stand – congratulations, you’re absolutely right. Without a good stand, nothing else you do is going to make much difference.

Sounds simple enough, right? So what’s the trick to getting good stands? Well maybe, just maybe, it’s planting no-till immediately after combining the wheat.

Spotty stands often result from top soil drying out rapidly after wheat has been combined. This may not be a serious situation under irrigation, but it can ruin dryland stand establishment. Fortunately, there usually is moisture near the soil surface during combining. Plant without delay before this moisture evaporates for better stand success.

No-till planting of turnips, summer annual grasses, or other cover crops into wheat stubble has many advantages. Most importantly, soil moisture is conserved. In addition, erosion is reduced, weed seeds remain buried, and tillage expenses are eliminated.

Of course, there are other challenges to getting a good stand. Planting equipment must be adjusted and operated properly when planting into heavy straw residue. Another challenge is weeds, either annual weeds that develop after wheat is combined or volunteer wheat that sprouts later in the summer. Be ready with post-emerge herbicides like Select Max or Poast Plus when appropriate for latter emerging weeds or volunteer wheat.

Wheat stubble makes a good seedbed but it takes a good plan to make it a success.

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