

Why Early Interseeding?

Early interseeding—the seeding of a cover crop into corn between the V-3 and V-7 stages—is a fairly new practice that is gaining in popularity throughout the Corn Belt.

Interseeded cover crops offer several benefits:

- **Capturing excess nutrients after corn is done growing;**
- **Providing a living root late into the growing season;**
- **Generating extra forage for fall grazing; and**
- **Improving the grazing quality of corn stalks.**

Most important, many trials all over the Midwest and throughout the Corn Belt have proven a slight **increase in corn yields in subsequent years, after interseeding with cover crops**, *not* a yield drag, as some producers might be wary.

Though many species of cover crops can be interseeded, **producers have seen most success with annual ryegrass, hybrid brassicas, clovers, and other legumes**. Cereal grains and traditional brassicas like radishes do not handle shade under the corn canopy as well and therefore aren't recommendable.

Successful incorporation of **interseeding requires planning**, specifically consideration of herbicide options and having access to the proper equipment for seeding. When choosing herbicides, be sure to **take residuals into account**, as they may affect the cover crop differently than the cash crop. That said, producers *are* finding shorter residual options and are seeing a decrease in weed pressure as their soil's health improves with cover crop practices.

Many equipment manufacturers are building interseeders, and many farmers and ranchers have opted to build their own. We have seen several liquid-nitrogen sidedress applicators equipped with seeders, and many older pieces of equipment, including rotary hoes, cultivators, and drills, have been successfully retrofitted with air seeders to get good seed-to-soil contact and excellent seed distribution.

If livestock grazing is important to your operation, the keys to success with cover crop interseeding are to **plant early**, plant into a suitable corn hybrid, use the proper cover crop species and seeding methods, and let the cover crop harvest sunlight as long as possible in the fall prior to grazing.

It's crucial to plant early, as the earlier the cover crop is in the ground, the more root mass it will build prior to the shading period, ensuring it will be strong as the corn dries back. **Optimal corn hybrids for interseeding have a more upright leaf structure** that allows some sunlight through the canopy, supporting better survival of the cover crop through the heat of summer.

Most of all, it's important to **use the proper cover crop seed**. Though cereal grains are common and familiar, hundreds of field trials show they offer limited success at best. We've been testing this for years and cannot recommend it.

After your corn harvest, let your cover crop soak up sunlight, any extra nutrients, and moisture late into the fall, allowing it to produce more forage. **Many cover species will grow for months after the cash crop is out**, taking advantage of the entire growing season, not just the small part occupied by corn.

Prairie Creek Seed

877-754-4019 | info@prairiecreekseed.com | prairiecreekseed.com