

Fall Rye Cereal 'A Quick Green Cover Crop With Many Uses'

Summary of Key Features

Fall Rye Cereal can be used for many reasons:

- Unlike many crops, Fall Rye Cereal has the ability to grow under lower temperatures and therefore is an excellent late and early season feed source as high quality fresh cut forage or pasture.
- As a rotational crop, it breaks up the disease cycles, reduces insects problems and nutrient disorders on vegetable, seed potato and strawberry crops.
- Fall Rye Cereal allows first and second year crops on newly cleared or plowed old perennial forage and pasture ground to build up the pH, nutrient levels and organic matter of the soil.
- When soil cannot be cultivated, Fall Rye Cereal is a cheap way of reducing, crowding out and preventing weed growth.
- Fall Rye Cereal grows in the beginning and the end of the growing season when other plants have either stopped growing or haven't started. Because of this, the crop acts as a ground canopy to hold the topsoil in place, particularly on the slope to prevent blow and wash out situations.

Fall Rye Cereal in the Crop Rotation and Forage Program

During the Forage Trials in Central Newfoundland, the Fall Rye Cereal crop grew seven feet high in fertile soil. Fall Rye Cereal can be the first crop grown on newly cleared land, after perennial forage; pasture crops; strawberries; early season vegetable crops like rape greens; early and mid-season cabbage; early potatoes; transplanted rutabagas; early broccoli; cauliflower; oriental vegetables; and lettuce or spinach. Fall Rye Cereal is planted in the beginning of September so that the crop is covering the ground before winter. It grows in the fall when many crops have stopped growing and continues to grow in the spring when the soil is too wet to prepare for planting crops. It is excellent as a late and early season feed source as cut forage or pasture. Different planting dates in August and September can be followed with the use of rotational grazing and electrical fencing for continuous fresh cut forage or pasture throughout the fall season.

Soil Building Properties

When growing Fall Rye Cereal before strawberries, seed potato and vegetable crops or alfalfa and timothy, the pH and nutrient levels in the soil can be adjusted upwards. This will allow for fewer fertility and micro-nutrient problems when these high value crops are growing, especially under dry soil conditions. The organic matter content of the soil is increased, helping to retain and make available moisture and nutrients for the plants. High moisture during tuber formation lessens the disease of scab on potatoes. Weeds and grasses are cultivated, crowded out and prevented from going to seed by growing Fall Rye Cereal in preparation for longer lasting perennial crops like alfalfa and timothy or strawberries. Resulting input costs are reduced.

Reduced Weed, Disease, Insect Pests, Soil Losses and Costs

Following early season potato and vegetable crops, Fall Rye Cereal allows a build-up in soil fertility, pH and organic matter, plus allows for an additional crop, or three crops in two years. Besides controlling weeds, Fall Rye Cereal reduces disease and insect problems on vegetable crops by breaking up these cycles in the soil. Fall Rye Cereal helps reduce weed, disease, insect pests, soil losses and costs in the crop rotation program. Because Fall Rye Cereal grows in the off season when many crops have stopped growing in the fall or have not yet been planted in the spring, it makes a good soil cover especially on the slope to prevent blowing soil from the wind and soil wash-outs from water erosion.

Planting Recommendations

In the beginning of September, the variety or cultivar Kodiak seeded at 110 lb./acre into soil with a pH of 6.5 - 7.0 and good fertility levels, provides a quick green ground cover. If soil test results are not available and the land is newly cultivated or low in fertility, the general fertilizer recommendations are: 500 lbs./acre

of 10.20.20 in the fall before seeding with a top dress early in the spring, either late April or early May, of 34.0.0@200 - 300 lbs./acre. Fertilizer rates can be reduced, especially if animal or poultry liquid manure is applied to the soil before planting.

Cut, Graze, Harvest or Plow Down Alternatives

Under low fall or early spring temperatures, the superior growing qualities of Fall Rye Cereal for cut forage or grazing can substantially increase locally produced high quality feed; especially when supplies are scarce and expensive. Early June, when the Fall Rye Cereal begins to head, is a good time to plow it in if the land is to be planted for a spring seeded or transplanted crop. The grain heads in late June and matures in late July or early August. The straw from the ripe grain can be used to protect strawberry plants during winter. Rye straw is a better insulation material than oat straw because it does not become as wet or compacted.

For further information contact your local agriculture office.