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September Cropping Decisions

by Bryan Cook, CCA-ON

As the excitement of the harvest season approaches, important cropping decisions for next year can be overlooked. September provides opportunity to review, plan and implement some important decisions.

Forages

If you routinely plant forages every spring, think about this now. Direct seeding forages should be targeted in fields with minimal crop residue from previous crop. Planting small forage seeds into corn stalks presents a challenge. A firm seed bed is more difficult to achieve with excessive residue.

Soil pH > than 6.5 for legume forages is a priority. Apply lime this fall. Lime should be applied six months prior to the pH sensitive crop.

Consider potash fertility in established forage fields in early September. Required potash should be applied prior to the critical fall harvest period to improve winter hardiness.

Fall Weed Control

Fall applied glyphosate for perennial weed control is just a shocking good investment. If your cropping system involves forages, cereals or I.P. soybeans, fall weed control is a priority. Our addiction to glyphosate applied during the growing season has clouded our weed control judgement. The control of perennial weeds in the fall with 650 grams of active glyphosate has far more value than spring applied. The weed staging is better suited for root uptake of the chemical in fall.

There is no time in April to control perennial weeds in cereals and forages. It has to be done in the fall. There is no excuse to have perennial weeds in the establishment year of forages. Dandelions in and around the perimeter of the field in cereal crops indicate better fall weed management is required.

Tank mixing glyphosate for resistance management is progressive or even required.

Be aware that certain products can burn plant tissue quickly creating the potential to reduce perennial weed control. The tissue becomes damaged prior to glyphosate uptake.

Wheat

Planting date for winter wheat is paramount. Earlier is better. Choose earlier maturing soybean varieties this fall for 2016 winter wheat fields. Longer maturing soybeans do not always yield better.

Fusarium is one of the most devastating diseases in field crops. It can turn a profitable wheat crop into a financial disaster. Wheat varieties with moderately resistant ratings (MR) for fusarium trumps yield potential. Choose varieties wisely.

Fall Tillage

Tillage is considered the craft of crop production. An art based on a science.

Remember the priority of keeping soil in the field. Residue cover of 30% is a minimum. Cover crops and biodiversity have merit. Ponder what you are trying to accomplish when burning diesel fuel. Properly designed planters and cropping systems can remove any benefit of field scale tillage.

Tillage requirements are directly tied to planter capabilities. Planter performance can be improved or compromised by tillage.

Fall tillage can help manage residue and increase soil surface area to improve seed to soil contact. Tillage can reduce soil bulk density which allows better root growth. Tillage is best known to help dry out and warm up soils ahead of the planter. Tillage can simply be required to smooth out areas of a field damaged during fall harvest.

Some of the best discussions I have with producers occur in the month of September. Good decisions now can have a huge impact on the anxiety level next spring.



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This industry driven program helps ensure that Ontario crop producers are well served by those providing their crop production advice. This article was written by one of those CCA's.

