

# Cover crops after silage

## Overview

Harvesting corn for silage leaves little plant residue on the ground to help control water runoff and soil erosion. A cover crop either interseeded before or planted immediately after silage harvest helps protect the soil from wind and heavy rains and improves soil structure and nutrient uptake.

## What you should know

- Cover crop options are expanding each year. Cover crops commonly used on corn silage ground include rye, ryegrass, red clover, hairy vetch, sweet clover and barley. Cover crop radish seed is also becoming more popular for breaking up compacted soils.
- Cover crops offer many benefits, but they can't do it all. A successful plan starts with priorities. Focus on the top two or three areas in your fields and identify issues cover crops can address, such as soil erosion, runoff or compaction.

## Action steps

1. **Choose your cover crop:** Consider what will be planted in the field the next year. Forage grasses are recommended for when soybeans will be planted. A legume or combination crop is recommended when grain corn or corn silage hybrids will be planted.
2. **Determine when to seed:** You'll need to seed your cover crop early enough to establish a thick growth by frost. Most cover crops should be in the ground by mid-to-late September, just after corn silage is harvested. Interseeding the cover crop into the corn allows the crop to establish before silage harvest. Most interseeding takes place at cultivation when the corn is 6 to 24 inches tall.
3. **Terminate cereal grain regrowth late:** The spring regrowth on overwintering cereal grain should be terminated as late as possible to obtain full benefit of the cover crop. Glyphosate and sethoxydim herbicides are recommended for killing the spring regrowth.



*Seed cover crops early to establish thick growth before frost comes.*



## 30-Second Summary

- Corn silage harvest leaves little residue on fields.
- Cover crops either interseeded or planted immediately after harvest can reduce soil erosion and other issues.
- Choose cover crops based on your field needs and subsequent crops.
- Plant cover crops early enough to achieve thick coverage for winter.

## NOTES:

For more information, contact:



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