Polycropping Principals

A well planned rotation is key as we plan for the use of cover crops. Whether it is the addition of a perennial forage, the use of a cover crop following or within a cash crop such as silage or greenfeed, or the integration of livestock into a cropping system, all systems require a plan to be successful.

Soil Health

Polycrop blend of turnip and radish for improving soil health, near Elkwater, AB

Dark green area was bale grazed in winter of 2019, near Quesnel, BC

Hay and pasture renovation

Direct seeding into an unproductive forage stand can be successful, with a planned approach. Producers will often reduce the amount of carryover forage on the acreage that they are wanting to rejuvenate. Selecting the grass or legume to complement the existing forage is important to stand establishment. Fall and spring moisture reserves are key to the success of your stand renovation.

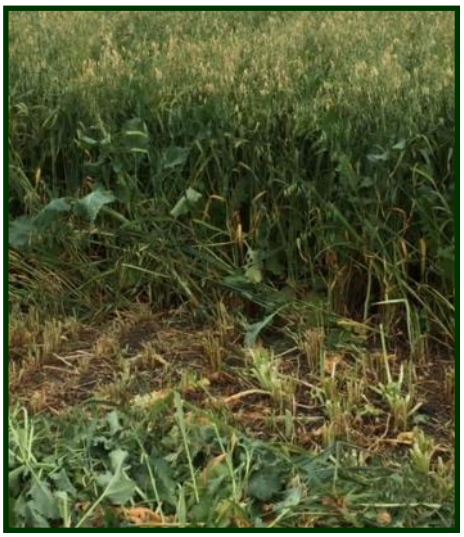
Alfalfa seeded at 3 lb/ac into an old crested wheatgrass stand near Irvine, AB

Direct seeding with Cache Brand meadow brome, tall fescue, pubescent wheatgrass, cicer milkvetch and annual ryegrass into an old pasture near Brooks, AB

Swath Grazing to Extend the Season

A planned strategy to grow a poly crop for the purpose of grazing into the winter season. The use of cover crops added to a cereal such as oats or triticale is most common and swathed just prior to freezing. The addition of cover crop species into the swath graze mix enhances the nutritive value of the swathed forage. Keeping the livestock on the land grazing allows for nutrient recycling while reducing feed yard costs under a traditional winter feed scenario.

Kale, hairy vetch, Japanese millet, turnip and brassica after grazing, near Viscount, SK.



Blend of Japanese millet, brassicas and oats for swath grazing in early winter, near Birch Hills, SK

Double Cropping and Interseeding

Producers looking at the use of annuals in a mono crop to increase plant diversity and assist with adding soil armor. In the case of the wheat photo below, the crimson clover was able to fix nitrogen during the growing season as well. The use of intercropping tools will require consideration as you plan for harvest and crop rotations into the future.

Crimson clover interseeded in wheat, near Tilley, AB

Italian ryegrass interseeded in corn, near Taber, AB

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