

Forage Options Follow Prevented Plant Corn and Soybeans

Spring 2019

Disclaimer: Communicate with your crop insurance agent about the specifics of your farm's crop insurance policy, rules, and potential penalties. Be clear regarding potential forage/cover crops you are considering planting and their planting dates. These details should be confirmed in writing between the policy holder and insurance agent to avoid misunderstandings.

Wet and cool conditions this spring has posed planting challenges for many Wisconsin farms. As wet weather persists, some farms are facing the decision to switch their intended crop to plant or claim prevented planting through crop insurance. At the same time many Wisconsin farms are facing short forage inventories following alfalfa winter kill, and a harsh winter in which they utilized more forage than expected.

These conditions have created a unique scenario where farms taking prevented plant payments may also want to grow an emergency forage crop. Crop insurance does provide a provision that forage can be harvested or grazed on prevented plant acres. However, harvest cannot occur until November 1st or later. A November 1 harvest date poses risks that producers should plan for as they make this decision.

Talking points:

- Following a claim of full Prevented Plant (PP) indemnity, you may plant a forage/cover crop, but the crop cannot be harvested or grazed until after November 1. Following a claim of partial PP, you may plant a forage/cover crop and harvest as you want.
- Establishing alfalfa following PP is an option but is subject to potential harvest date restrictions in the year PP is claimed.
- Harvesting forage after November 1 can be risky in Wisconsin. Plans should be made to harvest as silage/baleage as conditions are often not favorable for making dry hay. Even for silage, conditions for wilting to appropriate moisture for chopping may be challenging.
- There is a high risk of poor or incomplete fermentation of silages ensiled after November 1. Cold winter temperatures, and not fermentation, slow spoilage over winter. These forages may start fermenting, or spoiling, once warmer spring temperatures arrive. Producers may want to plan to feed these forages before warmer spring temperatures to mitigate this risk.
- Potential growers should coordinate with potential buyers on what species best fits their feeding needs and storage capabilities.

Species and variety selection:

- Spring varieties of small grains (oats, wheat, barley, tricale) are potential cool season grasses to plant for forage or cover. When harvest must be delayed until November 1, care needs to be made in selecting seeding dates for small grain forages.

- Spring varieties will head out, even when planting is delayed. Planting dates should be selected so that forage quality is maintained until November 1.
- Research on fall grown oats shows that high forage quality can be achieved. Variety selection impacts recommended planting dates. Seeding of all varieties should occur before August 15th at the latest in central and northern Wisconsin. Seeding of forage and late maturing varieties should occur earlier, around August 1. A June or early July seeding runs a high risk of maturing and poor forage quality before November 1. Please see “Fall-Grown Oat Forages: Cultivars, Planting Dates, and Expected Yields” by Wayne Coblenz and Mike Bertram for more details on seeding fall oats.
- Winter varieties planted this summer should remain in their vegetative stage through this year. Winter varieties of small grains, such as rye and wheat, need to vernalize over winter before they will reproduce (head out). Growers need to plan to terminate these crops next spring as they will likely survive over winter.
- Sorghum, Sudan, and Sorghum/Sudan are warm season grasses that should be seeded after soil temperatures reach 60-65°F. With adequate growing degree units, they often out yield small grain forages. In cool growing conditions, though, yields are often less than expected.
- There are brown midrib (BMR) forage sorghums, sorghum- sudangrass hybrids and sudangrasses. These types have not had the extent of yield reduction associated with brown midrib in corn silage. Where forage quality is a priority, select BMR varieties.
- Sorghum, Sudan, and Sorghum/Sudan can produce prusic acid, a compound toxic to livestock. Content is highest in young plants. Therefore, the recommendation is not to graze or cut for green chop until the plant is 18 to 20 inches tall. After a drought, new shoots may appear and cause the same effect. In addition, do not graze or green chop for 10 days after a killing frost.

Resources:

- **Late and Prevented Planting Options and Crop Insurance for Wisconsin Farmers**, by Paul D. Mitchell, Agricultural and Applied Economics, UW-Madison
<https://renk.aae.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/Late-and-Prevented-Planting-2019.pdf>
- **Corn Replant/late-plant Decisions in Wisconsin** by Joe Lauer, Professor of Agronomy, UW-Madison <https://learningstore.uwex.edu/Assets/pdfs/A3353.pdf>
- **Fall-Grown Oat Forages: Cultivars, Planting Dates, and Expected Yields** by Wayne Coblenz, U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center, and Mike Bertram, Superintendent Arlington Ag Research Station
<https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/forage/files/2017/06/FallOatYield-FOF-1.pdf>