

Bulletin

HOW TO GROW FALL RYE

Fall rye is shallow seeded in the fall into suitable ground with enough snow trapping potential to help ensure survival over the winter and into the spring growing period. It should be seeded with sufficient time to establish 2-4 leaves at the crown and possibly one tiller prior to fall freeze up temperatures arriving. Fall rye has multiple uses, being able to produce grain as well as function as a pasture extender or as ensilage material. It can be grown on slightly lighter soil and tends to be very hardy in winter survival ratings.

Selecting a Field

Fall rye performs best if seeded into stubble from a previous non-wheat crop that will allow adequate snow trap to assist winter survival. It is well adapted to a wide range of soil types and conditions; it grows well on light, sandy, erosion-prone land although it does respond to better soil types and fertility. It will not perform on saline or very acid soils. Stubble from crops of canola, mustard, or barley work well, while field pea or lentil stubble is considered unsuitable, due mainly to poor snow trap ability. These low residue crops do offer advantages of early maturity, residual nitrogen and desirable cropping rotations, and if they are to be used, the rye should be planted 7-10 days earlier

then normal for your area and will benefit from a slightly increased seeding rate. Thicker, more advanced crops tend to develop more crown tissue and survive winters in better condition than shorter, later and less developed crops. Eliminate or avoid as much competition from weeds and volunteer crops as possible.

Seeding

The first rule for seeding any winter cereal is to seed shallow, usually less than 1 inch deep, and place the required amount of phosphorous fertilizer right with the seed at the time of seeding. Use pedigreed seed if possible, of a recommended variety for your area. Fall rye is more susceptible to stem rust and seedling rots compared to other cereals, so seed should be treated with a systemic seed dressing to protect it.

Seeding is normally carried out about the last week of August for the northern areas of the Prairies, while the first 2 weeks of September is targeted for the southern areas. Late seeding usually results in a yield reduction, delayed heading, later maturity, reduced plant height and lower bushel weight. Seeding should not be delayed due to dry soil conditions, rather having seed in the ground at the optimum date, prior to

rainfall ensures the greatest probability of maximum yields.

Seeding rates vary slightly, but usually require a very minimum of 1.5 bushel per acre, with

experienced growers recommending 2 bushels per acre, in order to establish 25-30 plants per foot of row reaching 2-4 leaves and possibly one tiller prior to freeze-up.

Fertilizing

Fall rye benefits from phosphorous placed with the seed at time of seeding to assist strong root and crown development, and provide for a better winter survival situation. Nitrogen added in the spring will boost yields for grain production, and should be applied as early as practical without damaging the land, as the crop needs most of its' required nitrogen early in the spring growth period.

Weed Control

All cereal crops benefit from the removal of competitive weeds, especially perennials like thistles and quack grass, and fall rye is no exception. It tends to exhibit vigorous growth in the spring after the fall establishment period and will out-compete many weed problems, thus saving the producer from the cost of expensive crop protection products, and adding to his profit picture. Follow the guidelines published in the various provincial weed control recommendations.

Uses and Marketing

Fall seeded rye can be used as a high quality feed source for fall and spring grazing and still produce a grain crop, but any significant grazing pressure will result in grain yield reductions. However, the benefits of grazing may

outweigh the loss in grain yield. Spring grazing results in more severe grain yield losses than fall grazing.

Seeding in the spring for pasture purposes requires the rye to be seeded at 1.5 times the fall seeding rate in order to produce the maximum forage production. Using rye for spring pasture delays grazing on the perennial pasture to allow recovery and maximize forage production.

Seeding in the fall for fall grazing should be about 4 weeks earlier than recommended for a grain crop to provide sufficient growth for fall pasture.

Fall rye hay quality is equivalent to other cereals if it is cut from the boot to heading stage. If cutting is delayed past the heading stage, quality drops and the feed becomes less palatable.

Grain crops can be sold through the traditional grain gathering system for milling purposes, or used for feeding. Rye production for grain will benefit greatly from an enhanced fertilization program, to maximize yields.

Most commercial users of rye for milling, baking, and distilling have a rather specific set of standards they desire, and it is best to sample your grain adequately and submit those samples to the buyer prior to any sale. Harvested grain should be stored at a moisture content below 13% to reduce the possibility of sprouting and heating, both of which can irreversibly damage the baking quality.

Information

More information can be obtained through your local Agrologist or by contacting Winter Cereals Canada at the contact numbers displayed on the top of this bulletin.