ANNUAL RYEGRASS
COVER CROP FACT SHEET FOR IOWA

Annual ryegrass (Lolium multiflorum) is a deep-rooted winter annual grass recommended for experienced cover croppers. Annual ryegrass is a quick growing cover crop that is excellent for fighting soil compaction.

Identifying Features
» Sheath split to base
» Small, clasping auricles
» Leaves are dark green and glossy
» Leaves are narrow and hairless
» Often confused with fescue

Cultural Traits
» Winter annual grass
» Minimum germination soil temperature: 40°F
» Cold temperature tolerance: 0°F
» Seeding date: Mid July to Late August* (F)***
» Seeding date: Early April to Early May* (S)***

Planting Information
» Drill at ¼ - ½ inch (12 lbs./acre PLS**)
» Broadcast (14 lbs./acre PLS)
» Aerial (18 lbs./acre PLS)

Additional planting information:
» ~190,000 seeds/lb.
» Broadcasting without incorporation is usually less dependable than drilling or broadcasting with incorporation.
» Use a diploid variety with minimally waxy leaves to make termination more successful.

C:N (Carbon:Nitrogen) Ratios
» Annual Ryegrass 20:1 to 31:1

*Planting information from Midwest Cover Crop Council (midwestcovercrops.org). Refer to local NRCS office recommendations (Iowa Field Office Technical Guide, Section 4, 340 Cover Crop) for seeding dates and rates pertinent to location specific financial assistance program requirements.
**Pure Live Seed
***F=Fall S=Spring
Performance

Dry matter = 1,000 - 4,000 lbs./acre per year
(Biomass quantity is dependent on planting and termination dates and precipitation.)

Performance Ratings

» Cash crop interseed (early vegetative) Excellent
» Cash crop overseed (late seed fill) Very good
» Grazing quality Very good
» Mechanical forage harvest Very good
» Nitrogen fixer N/A
» Nitrogen scavenger Good
» Weed suppression Good
» Compaction fighter Excellent
» Erosion control Good
» Lasting residue Very good
» Quick grower Very good
» Drought tolerance Fair
» Low fertility tolerance Fair
» Shade tolerance Very good

Additional Considerations

» Could increase the risk of spring cutworm.
» Using a ‘not stated’ variety will increase termination difficulty.
» Terminate at 6-8 inches and follow best spray practices to ensure termination success.
» Not recommended to plant in a cover crop mixture.
» Annual ryegrass can be difficult to terminate and is generally not recommended except for specific uses and by highly experienced cover crop users.