**Sorghum-Sudangrass**

Cover Crop Fact Sheet for Iowa

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**Sorghum-Sudangrass** (*Sorghum bicolor* × *Sorghum bicolor var. sudanese*) is a quick growing summer annual grass used as a cover crop to scavenge excess nutrients in the soil, suppress weeds, and fight compaction.

### Identifying Features

- Leaves are similar to corn but with less leaf area and waxier surface
- Leaves are hairless
- Some varieties have a brown midrib

### Cultural Traits

- Summer annual grass
- Minimum germination soil temperature: 65°F
- Cold temperature tolerance: 32°F
- Seeding date: Mid May to Early August*

### Planting Information

- **Drill** at ¾ - 1½ inches (15 lbs./acre PLS**)  
- **Broadcast** (17 lbs./acre PLS)  
- **Aerial** is not recommended

### Additional planting information:

- ~18,000 seeds/lb.
- increase the seeding rate when using for forage/grazing,
- If applying manure, tend toward lower end of the seeding rate.

### C:N (Carbon:Nitrogen) Ratio

- **Sorghum-Sudangrass** 10:1 to 30:1

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*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**
**Performance**

Dry matter = 4,000 - 8,000 lbs./acre per year  
(Biomass quantity is dependent on planting and termination dates and precipitation.)

**Performance Ratings**

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

**Additional Considerations**

- Does not tolerate shade, flooding, or ponding.
- Well-suited for grazing and wildlife.
- Sorghum-sudangrass can cause prussic acid poisoning in livestock. Do not graze until at least 18-24 inches.
- Mowing to a height of less than 2 inches after 2 feet or more of growth may terminate. Mowing after heading may terminate.