

Fond du Lac County Success from the Field

Frost Seeding Clover? It Works!

Background

Neil Drummy, a Wisconsin row crop farmer, owns and operates land in Dodge, Fond du Lac, and Columbia Counties. Neil is consciously a good steward of the land in the conservation decisions he makes, while also looking for ways to increase yields without causing undo harm to the land he operates.

Program Successes

In fall 2015, Neil attended a cover crop meeting hosted by local seed dealers. They promoted seeding of cover crops, specifically recommending crimson clover in conjunction with wheat. Neil was convinced and took this idea to heart, making a decision to give cover crops a good try on some of his wheat ground. In winter 2015, while visiting with his tractor dealer, Neil was informed the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides cost share assistance for practices, like cover crops, through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). In late winter 2016, Neil visited the NRCS Fond du Lac Service Center. He discussed conservation planning and cover crop options with local NRCS staff. He also received technical assistance in feasibility to frost seed clover with UREA in spring. "In conservation planning with Neil, I thought it would be possible to frost



Frost seeded of Crimson clover into winter wheat on March 21, 2016. The wheat has been harvested and the clover is established.

seed clover with UREA; this would help Neil specifically by growing his own nitrogen; it's a great concept worth trying," said Cory Drummond, NRCS Fond du Lac District Conservationist. Neil submitted an EQIP application and with Cory's assistance, planned frost seeding 24 acres of crimson clover into existing wheat planted in the fall of 2015.

"The timing of doing a frost seeding like this is key. You want to be able to hit it just right, and Mother Nature has to be in your favor," explained Neil. "We requested a variance with NRCS to be plant clover in mid March. We had warm days and a snow storm in March so our planting window was narrow."

"Neil's stand of clover took well and looks excellent," said Drummond. "If you plan properly and are willing to try something different, success can happen." Neil will terminate the clover in the fall and plant corn next spring. The savings he will have gained by growing his own nitrogen, instead of buying fertilizer, should be quite noticeable.



Close-up look of plants per square foot. Picture taken on August 11, 2016.

