



NRCS Soil Health Update *February, 2018*

Sharing soil health marketing communications information and resources from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, other partners and the media.



AMERICAN
Agriculturist.

FarmWeekNow.com

MissouriRuralist.

KMA Land – Yield reduction? Not in these cover crop fields

The [Cannon River Watershed Partnership](#) just completed a two-year study in cooperation with eight farmers in Rice, Goodhue and Waseca counties to examine methods of interseeding cover crops into standing corn early in the growing season and the impact on corn yields. [Read more.](#)

American Agriculturalist – 6 cover cropping strategies to max out your success

Struggling to get your cover crop program off the ground or to take it to the next level? There could be many reasons for the difficulty. Farmers who are successful with it plan at least a year ahead. Treating your cover crops like cash crops lays a great foundation for maximizing success. [Read more.](#)

Farm Week Now – Field, watershed studies show cover crops cut nitrogen losses

Purdue researcher reports cover crops lead to 'significant reductions' of nitrogen leaving the field from both fall- and spring-applied fertilizer. [Read more.](#)

Missouri Ruralist – Cover crops may not provide soil health benefits this year

Harvest 2017 dragged on. Whether it was the late planting start, full elevators at harvest or long lines at the river terminal, crops in some areas of the state did not make it out of the field in a timely fashion.

University of Missouri Extension agronomist Rusty Lee says those delays pushed back cover crop planting.

Lee says farmers need to plan their cover crop management program now for 2018. [Read more](#) to learn his suggestions.

AMERICAN Agriculturist.



Big Picture Agriculture

American Agriculturalist – Got pasture? Give it a health boost

Pastures, too, can benefit from the huge research investment and focus on soil health. As the saying goes, “If you build it, they will come.” If you make sure soil microbes are fed, they’ll do the work of soil health and fertility for you. [Read more.](#)

NCAT ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture – Building healthy pasture soils

This publication, a supplement to ATTRA's [Managed Grazing Tutorial](#) session on Pasture Fertility, introduces properties of soil, discusses evaluation and monitoring of soil quality, and introduces grazing management principles and techniques that promote healthy soil. Download the free PDF [here.](#)

Brownfield Ag News for America – Program improves soil health and bottom line

Hoosier farmers are learning how to better manage nitrogen in their fields with personalized data from on-farm research.

Meg Leader coordinator for INfield Advantage says the program helps farmers improve both productivity and soil health.

“So that every pound of nitrogen they put on their field is going into their crop and less of it is going into water supply and effecting water quality downstream,” she says. She tells Brownfield the program also helps farmers thrive when margins are tight. [Read more.](#)

Big Picture Agriculture – VIDEO: Healthy soil on an organic farm in Iowa

This USDA-NRCS video features southwest Iowa organic farmer, Roger Lansink. He talks about soil health and the use of green manure, livestock manure, and minimal tillage — while stressing the

importance of crop rotation. He has a cow-calf operation and also raises turkeys, alfalfa, corn, soybeans, barley, and field peas. [Watch here.](#)

OhioFarmer.



Ohio Farmer – No-tillers share tips at conference to overcome obstacles

Farmers attending the recent Ohio No-till Conference heard about some of the difficulties that can come with no-till and cover crops, but dedicated no-tillers assured the crowd that dealing with those problems is worth the effort. “There are these little hiccups out here, but do you throw the baby out with the bathwater? No!” said Neil Badenhop, who no-tills his own farm in Wood County and also works as a representative for Valent. [Read more.](#)

Morning Ag Clips – Rye cover crops in corn on irrigated sands

In Minnesota, approximately 500,000 acres of irrigated farmland are highly productive but susceptible to nitrate leaching to groundwater. Irrigated sandy soils are especially vulnerable to leaching. A recent study from University of Minnesota, with support from Pope County SWCD and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, evaluated the use of winter rye as a cover crop in corn production. Early results show that a rye cover crop can help reduce nitrogen leaching in a corn after soybean rotation by 45 percent. [Read more.](#)

INDIANA PrairieFarmer.

Indiana Prairie Farmer – No-tillers must think about C-N ratio

No-till is a plus for the carbon cycle, but it requires paying attention to the carbon-nitrogen ratio.

The C-N ratio is just what it says: It’s the relative amount of carbon, typically contained in crop residue and cover crop residue, to nitrogen, including N in manure, soil-available N and commercial N in the soil. This is important in no-till and cover crop systems because the microbiology in the soil uses available nitrogen to help break down available carbon in crop and cover crop residue. [Read more.](#)



DakotaFarmer.



DakotaFarmer.



Civil Eats – How a Grain and Legume Farmer Harvests Nutrition from the Soil

Larry Kandarian grows legumes alongside ancient grains on his California farm, producing a polyculture that benefits both the health of the land and his own. [Read more.](#)

Dakota Farmer – Cover crop grazing trial on cropland falls short

Farming failures: Two farmers learn from their cover crop grazing trial on high-quality cropland. [Read more.](#)

Iowa Learning Farms – Nine-year on-farm study reports improved yields following cereal rye

Cereal rye cover crops added to a corn-soybean rotation have little to no negative effect on yield, and actually increased soybean yields in eight site-years and corn yield in two-sites years, according to a nine-year study conducted by the Iowa Learning Farms (ILF) and Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI). [Read more.](#)

Dakota Farmer – What's the best way to terminate cover crops?

If you planted a cover crop in 2017, the good news is you were protecting your field all winter and improving the soil health. Now as spring arrives, it is time to focus on the termination of the cover crop and growing a productive cash crop. Termination can be achieved by several methods: rolling, winterkill, tillage and chemical control. In addition to how, the timing of when to kill the cover is also a consideration. The different types of covers, weather, cash crop and comfort level all play a role in the decision process. [Read more.](#)

High Plains/Midwest Ag Journal – Cover crops and soil health are a winning combination at Tiffany Cattle Company

Most feedlot operators don't necessarily like to be farmers. At Tiffany Cattle Company, however, farming and cattle feeding go hand-in-hand. That's because brothers Shawn and Shane Tiffany have implemented a cover crop-based grazing system on their nearly 2,500 acres of farmland near Herington, Kansas. [Read more.](#)

INDIANA PrairieFarmer.



Indiana Prairie Farmer – 4 ways to boost soil health and maintain yields

A great way to start the new year is to make a commitment to invest in soil health. The soil is much more than a medium for growing crops; it is a living biological ecosystem. We rely on millions of tiny microorganisms to do their jobs and create a favorable environment for plants to grow. Allow these microorganisms to work for you and, in turn, reap the benefits. [Read more.](#)

Ag Web – Cover crops and cattle are cash

Initially planting cover crops solely for erosion protection, Taylor transitioned to soil health covers, and recently to grazing covers in tandem with cattle rotation. On Taylor's ground in Phillips County, Ark., livestock are the vehicle to building high-potential soils. [Read more.](#)

Iowa Learning Farms – Conservation chat 38: Go deep with earthworms

Episode 38 of the Conservation Chat digs in deep to talk about earthworms, why they matter, where they thrive and what they can tell us about soil health. The chat features two heavy-hitters of earthworm research related to cover crops: Ann Staudt who leads research on the relationship between night crawlers and cover crops with the Iowa Learning Farms and Dr. Tom Kaspar, a plant physiologist who is also considered to be "the grandfather of cover crop research" in Iowa. [Listen here.](#)

No-Till Farmer – Healthy plants grow in healthy soils — and understanding why that is

In this episode of the *No-Till Farmer* podcast, brought to you by Yetter Manufacturing Company, principal scientist at Rhizoterra Inc. Jill Clapperton discusses the characteristics of healthy soils and the importance of building soil structure in creating a diverse, viable no-till system. [Listen here.](#)



Nebraska Farmer – Survey once again finds cover crops boost yield

There are still lots of questions when it comes to cover crops. But the advantages of cover crops are certainly coming to light for both crop growers and livestock producers.

For the fifth year in a row, a nationwide cover crop survey of growers reported that corn and soybean yield had increased following cover crops. [Read more.](#)

Additional soil health marketing communications materials from the soil health communications team are in development, so stay tuned for further updates. As always, please feel free to contact me at any time if you need additional information or would like to offer contributions to the Update.

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