16-Lancaster Farming, Friday, Nov. 29, 1957

Winter Cover Crops Help Maintain Soil Structure by Insulating

Winter cover crops that reclaim | thawing. lost plant nutrients, provide organic matter, and prevent eroof Agriculture says.

Soil-management specialists at USDA's Agricultural Research thawing during the winter may Center, Beltsville, Md., have improve soil by breaking up found that cover crops planted clods, these forces are frequently early in the fall insulate the soil detrimental to soil-aggregate and prevent damage to soil struc-ture by repeated freezing and particles) under certain field con-

Recommended cover crops inrole in maintaining granular soil and crimson clover. They may be structure, the U.S. Department used singly or in combination, depending on local conditions.

Although repeated freezing and

ditions. frost penetrates. Cover crops also promote and help to maintain large populations of earthworms and other earth-boring organisms, which increase infiltration and speed up drainage of excess water from the surface soil.

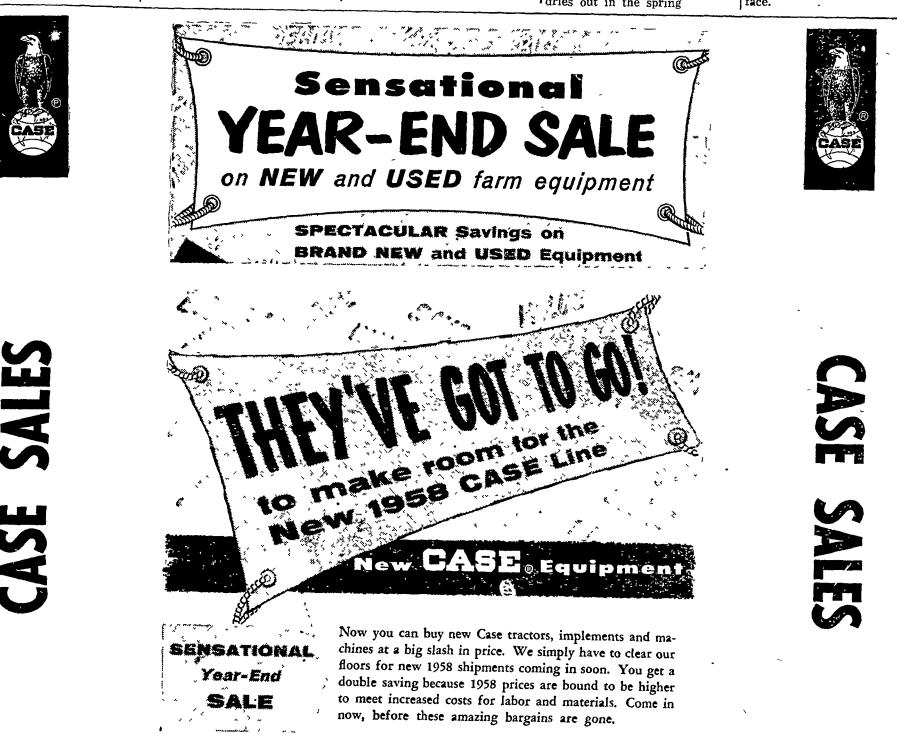
Laboratory and field tests at

Beltsville indicate that break-The researchers point out that down of soil aggregates is a major USDA researchers, clude rye and other cereals, rye the protective insulation provided problem at wet soils where freez methods of tillage and replacesion can also play an important grass, annual bromegrass, vetch, by vegetation reduces the number ing and thawing takes place sev. ment of crop residues resulting in of times a soil freezes during the eral times during the winter varying rates of soil deterioration winter and the depth to which months. This is a particularly in corn plots fomerly in sod. common occurrence in the Middle Atlantic States.

> protected fields causes slumping plowing, plow-depth tillage with of the soil granules when they be- sweeps, and a mulch-till "oncecome wet. This condition leads to over" planter. Residues were surface puddling, followed by chopped and disked and either crusting and cracking as the soil turned under or left on the surdries out in the spring

In other trials conducted by different

Corn was grown each year with a winter cover crop of rye or Freezing and thawing on un- vetch. Tillage variations included face.



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