

# It's time to plan cover crops

NEWARK, Del. — In less than a month harvest of early corn will begin. It may seem like pushing the season a bit, but it's time to think about cover crops and how they'll fit into your tillage plans for next year.

Will you use covers in all your fields, or just following early harvested corn? Will you plant a legume cover to capture some low cost nitrogen during the fall and

spring months?

These are just a few of the questions farmers should be asking themselves now, says University of Delaware extension agronomist Bill Mitchell.

Diesel fuel will cost more next year, so no-tillage may be in your future as you try to conserve energy, he notes.

"If you're thinking no-tillage, my experience would

suggest that you can't improve on hairy vetch as a cover crop."

He bases his opinion on the excellent results some Delaware farmers have achieved with this program. Stands and weed control have been outstanding where corn was planted into a heavy crop of hairy vetch last spring.

The leaf color on plants testifies too that the fact they

have an abundant supply of slow release nitrogen working for them in this cover.

"I wish there was a fool-proof method of obtaining a stand of hairy vetch," says Mitchell.

Sometimes it appears as easy as throwing seed at the ground. Many have had good results with aerial seedings, with and without disking the

stalk ground following harvest. But occasionally these methods don't work so well.

The best stands he's seen have resulted from use of a grain drill at seeding rates of 20 to 25 pounds per acre.

However you plant vetch, most of its growth will be made next spring. To allow maximum time for spring growth, though, this cover needs to be planted following the first harvested corn in the fall on ground that will be last planted to corn in the spring.

The optimum time for planting no-tillage corn in a vetch cover is May 1 to 10.

Vetch seed is currently priced at about 65 cents a pound. This has encouraged

Mitchell to look into the possibility of producing seed locally.

He has grown small fields of the legume at Georgetown and Newark with yields of up to 500 pounds per acre, cleaned seed. At Newark the vetch was windrowed when dew was on plants to avoid shattering. When direct harvest was made at Georgetown without taking this precaution, shattering losses were high.

If Paraquat is used to kill it, vetch harvest can be started about July 1 and the area double cropped with soybeans. This could be an attractive cropping system for someone interested in the local production of vetch seed, notes the agronomist.

## Australian minister visits Md. Simmental farm

SHERWOOD, Md. — The Honorable Peter J. Nixon, Minister of Primary Industries of Australia, was a guest of Langdon Farms, Sherwood, Maryland during his recent visit to the United States

Accompanied by his wife, Sally, the Nixons toured the Simmental breeding farm and departed admittedly enthusiastic about the Simmental, breed and the accomplishments of the foundation cows and their offspring which comprise the Langdon herd. Discussions have begun regarding the Nixon's purchase of a Langdon Farm two-year-old bull.



The Honorable Peter J. Nixon, Minister of Primary Industries of Australia (left) visits with William Miller, owner of Langdon Farms.

A knowledgeable cattleman, Nixon maintains both dairy and beef breeding herds in his native Australia.

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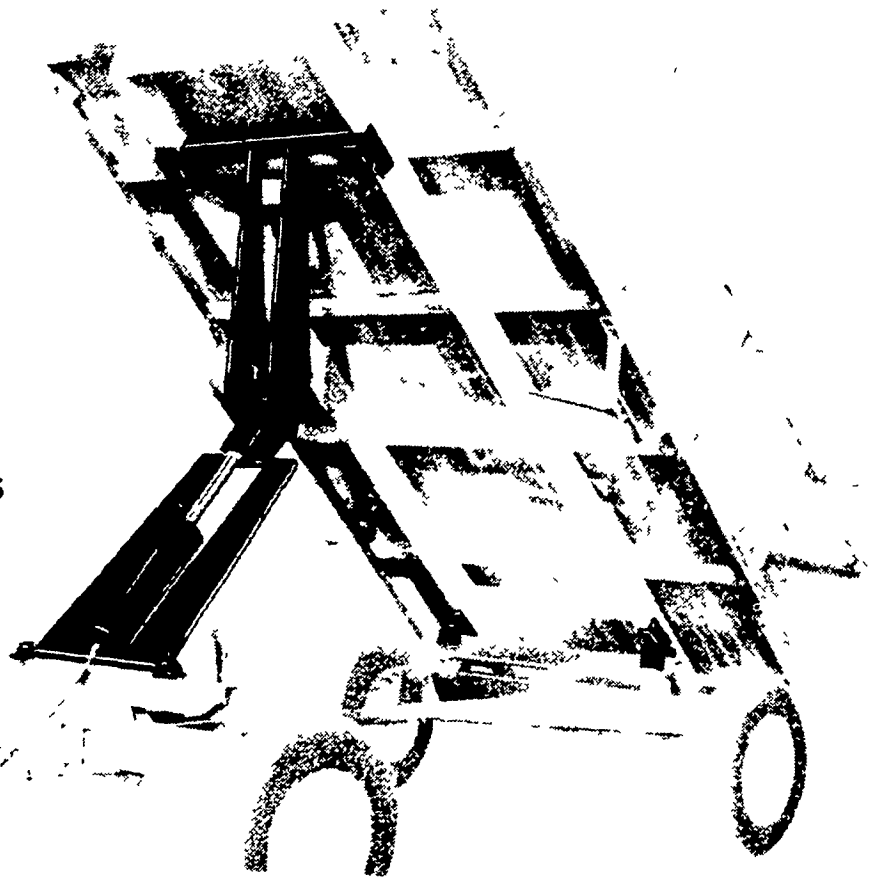
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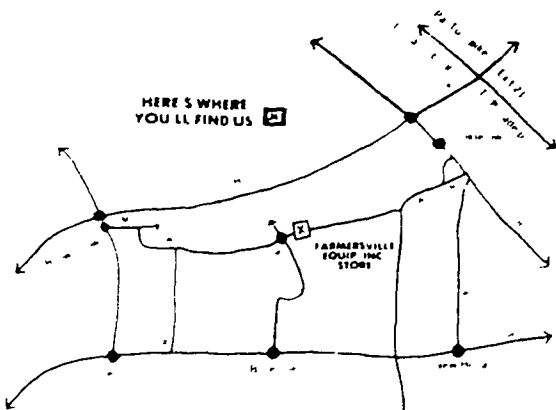
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