

'Spray-plant-harvest' program is studied

CHICAGO, Ill. — Following alfalfa or clover with corn has generally meant plowing the legume under with a moldboard plow. But if research conducted by Ellery Knake, University of Illinois Extension agronomist, continues successfully, more farmers may eliminate that tillage trip plus several more.

"Alfalfa and clover improve soil structure. They plow the soil for you," he says.

Knake has studied the effectiveness of various herbicide treatments in what he calls a "spray-plant-harvest" program for planting no-till corn into alfalfa or clover. Preplant treatments of Banvel herbicide or 2,4-D, or a combination of the two, appear to be the most promising, he says.

In his research, herbicides were applied in the spring to control one year old stands of legumes. No-till corn was planted the next day. And for weed control, the entire area was treated with a combination of 1½ pounds per acre each of atrazine and Bladex, two pints of Dual and one quart of crop oil concentrate per acre.

Research results

The combination of Banvel, applied at one pint per acre, and 2,4-D, applied at ½ pound per acre, resulted in 80 percent control of alfalfa and 100 percent control of clover.

Treatment with two quarts per acre of Roundup resulted in about 40 percent control of alfalfa and about 90 percent control of clover as rated in late June. Control of alfalfa in the Roundup plots did seem to improve as the season progressed, Knake says. If a perennial grass has been seeded with the legume, Roundup or

Paraquat may be needed.

The Banvel and 2,4-D treatment resulted in the highest corn yield, 173 bushels.

Besides controlling the alfalfa and clover effectively, the Banvel and 2,4-D treatment was the least expensive. Knake estimates the cost of using Banvel with 2,4-D at about \$8 per acre.

He also feels that either Banvel or 2,4-D could be used alone to control alfalfa and clover. However, Banvel may work better on some weeds while 2,4-D might work better on others. He says the combination may broaden the spectrum of control for some fields.

"One of the advantages of Banvel is that in addition to controlling existing broadleaf weeds, it has some preemergence activity through the soil. Another possibility is a split treatment with some herbicide applied prior to planting and some applied before the corn is at the five inch stage," Dr. Knake says. This may help to further control the alfalfa and broadleaf weeds.

An older alfalfa stands and where you have tough to control perennial broadleaf weeds, a fall treatment of Banvel or 2,4-D followed by a spring application may be appropriate, he says.

More research is being conducted this year to further define rates and times of application. Some labels have been updated recently to allow some treatments but others haven't. Be sure that the treatments you plan on using are in compliance with current labeling, Knake says.

Control weeds

Knake suggests that growers seed alfalfa or clover on this year's

set-aside acres to help control erosion and weeds.

"These acres are some of the most important to control weeds on," he points out, "because weeds left to produce seed can mean much more effort and expense for weed control in future years."

One of the keys is to seed straight alfalfa or clover with no perennial grass. This allows a much lower cost program when you get ready for no-till corn. Cost of seed,

seedbed preparation and herbicides for direct seeding the legume without a so called "nurse crop" may run about \$30 per acre, Dr. Knake says. But by the time you subtract \$15 or so for the nitrogen the legume adds, you have a relatively low cost program. And the government is essentially paying for your costs on set-aside acres, he adds.

Also, you may be able to graze the legume in the fall or get one hay cutting in the spring and still

no-till plant corn— depending on ASCS regulations and growing conditions in your area. It's important, however, to leave enough growth to allow translocation of the Banvel or 2,4-D into the roots. Three to five inches should be adequate, Knake says, but it's critical that the alfalfa or clover is actively growing. And if you use Banvel, apply it early to avoid possible injury to nearby soybeans.

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