



Field Notes for The Week Of 5-16-2022 Planting Green

What a week! This past week was a beautiful week to get much accomplished in southern Ohio, with a full week of sunshine and temperatures in the mid-eighties, the tractors and planter hit the fields rolling. Talking to many producers across the county, it sounds like a great deal of corn and soybeans have been planted and soil conditions were improving remarkably fast. I also took notice of many acres of cereal grain crops being mowed for haylage and even some first cutting perennial hay crops being harvested DRY! This week I was able to get out of the office and conduct some scouting on Alfalfa acreage, perennial hay fields, and winter wheat. Some of the key notes from my scouting efforts was that Alfalfa weevil presence has increases substantially in the last week due to the warmer temps. I came across one field of Alfalfa that had 4 larvae per stem, early harvest is usually the most economical way to take care of Alfalfa weevil. Other than that, both alfalfa and perennial grass hay stand have surprisingly improved almost overnight, with growth heights around 30-38 inches and enter reproductive stage. As we enter the mid part of May, I would like to remind hay producers that quality is dropping every day we delay harvest and allow plants to mature and produce seed. Winter wheat is looking quite impressive as well as we enter Feeks growth stage 10.5-11 (full head), this stage of growth is a critical period for applying fungicide for head scab, Septoria leaf spot, and Downy Mildew.

This week I managed to collect some soil health samples; this is part of an ongoing research project being conducted by The Ohio State University Soil Health Department. Results are to show how different management practices effects the long-term health of the soil. One of those management practices include cover crops and how they are managed. As a 20 something year old farmer, I am used to being called green. Sometimes I struggle with that, but in this case, I would like to be called green all day! This week on my personal farm I planted about 50 acres of corn in standing green and living cover crops. So why would you want to plant in a jungle mess of cover crops? Here are a few reasons.

1. **It's all about biomass-** As cover crops mature biomass can get as high as 10,000lbs/acre. The more biomass accumulated increases weed control and builds soils overtime.
2. **Slow release of nutrients-** As the biomass breaks down nutrients will be released slowly to the cash crop planted in the cover crops.
3. **Water use factors-** For wet fields, allowing the cover crop to grow will allow for moisture to be taken up out of the ground, this makes for better planting conditions. I would recommend watching the weather, if there is a chance for conditions to get hot and dry, terminating the cover crop is the better option.
4. **Less pest pressure-** many producers believe that cover crops increase pest pressure such as slugs, this can be true if cover crops are killed too soon. Kill the cover crop early eliminates the pest food source in turn making the corn or soybean the new food source. Research has shown that by allowing the cover crop to grow, insects and slugs will prefer to chew on them over the corn or soybean crop.

