

# Weekly Article

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## Winter Wheat Planting Considerations

Hello, my Name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural resource Educator and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of agriculture. The dust continues to fly across the county as dry and cool weather conditions continue for another week. Looking at the forecast ahead, it doesn't look like much precipitation will fall to rejuvenate the dwindling soil moisture levels. The past week was busy one for many grain crop producers as soybean and corn harvest ramped up. I was able to complete a few of my on-farm research plots and was amazed with some of the yields on both corn and soybeans. Moisture levels are decreasing rapidly with many soybeans reaching levels as low as 10% moisture while corn moisture levels are still hovering around the 18-23% range. Crop test weights have also been coming in at very good levels, soybeans ranging from 56-58lbs, and corn levels have been 57-60lbs. Overall grain quality looks very good, and I have not seen much sign of any molds that might cause mycotoxin issues. I have walked some corn fields that might have some standability concerns if allowed to stand later into the fall. A good practice to check stalk quality is to lean the stalk over and see how much force it takes to break the stalk. Hay harvest has pretty much wrapped up for the season and many pastures are literally burned up! Livestock managers have reported feeding hay routinely and even some springs slowing down or drying up. The livestock market barns continue to be full of feeder's calves and markets continue to be very favorable with value added feeders weighing 550lbs ranging in prices of \$1.80-\$1.90/lb. There is no doubt it is a busy time on the farm with a lot of field activities taking place, but there is one fall chore that continues to decrease over time, that is planting winter wheat.

Winter wheat production has decreased dramatically across the county in the last 20 years, mainly due to the change in crop rotation and farmer enterprise structures. The amount of wheat planted for grain has dramatically decreased, lets go back to 1992 (good year) USDA Agriculture census showed that Adams County planted and harvested 3,716 acres of wheat for grain, fast forward to the 2017 AG Census that shows Adams County planted and harvested only about 1,518 acres. Wheat is one of the world's main food sources. The world's top food producing countries include China, India, Russia, U.S.A, and France. With the severe drought in western plains, Russia, and India planting has been delayed and yields have been extremely low for spring planted wheat. Other factors such as food shortages in India, the war between Ukraine and Russia, and export bans placed on other major wheat exporters, the world wheat stocks have become very tight. Many market analysts have fears of severe wheat shortages that will cause a chain reaction to the world economy, driving grain prices higher in turn driving wheat prices to potentially record highs. With all that said, there might be a possibility to make a profit from raising wheat while also diversifying your crop rotation. Here is a list of possible benefits of adding Winter Wheat into your crop rotation and why you might want to consider pulling out the planter this fall.

1. **Increased row crop yields-** Research has shown that the addition of winter wheat in a corn and soybean rotation has increased corn yields as much as 10%.
2. **Break disease cycles-** summer annual crops grown year after year in the same field can attract insect pest and diseases. Winter wheat can help break the cycle of those pest and at the same time attract beneficial insects such as ladybird beetles that love to eat soybean aphids and other soft bodied insects. Wheat also attracts the pink lady beetle that feeds on larvae of the European corn borers.
3. **Good for the soil-** When planted early enough in the fall, winter wheat can provide good ground cover and diversity in plant roots equate to diversity in soil microbes aiding in nutrient cycling and residue decomposition. One of the goals to maintain soil health is to have a living root in the soil as long as possible, with winter wheat in a crop rotation, 22 month of living roots is possible.
4. **Capture unused nutrients-** Winter Wheat can take up unused nitrogen that is not used by corn or soybeans, preventing nitrogen loss through leaching during the winter season.
5. **Weed control-** Winter Wheat helps cover the ground, aiding in winter annual weed establishment and growth.
6. **Opportunities to accomplish odd jobs-** After wheat is harvested, jobs such as tile installation, lime application, grass waterway construction, manure application, and late summer forage seeding can be accomplished when the soil conditions are conducive, and the farmers schedule is not as tight!

In summary Winter Wheat can be a great crop to add to your current crop rotation and it has many benefits to the soil health and environment. Increased corn and soybean yield can be one of many benefits and to top it all off the world demand is high and many countries truly depend on wheat has a large percent of their diet. If you have some acres that might work for wheat production and need some help figuring out planting rates, fertility and other agronomic practices give me a call!

**Ag Educator Words of encouragement** – “Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing you will be successful” - **Albert Schweitzer**