



Welcome to Ground Work

Get Your Wheat Off to a Great Start

9/30/11

As harvest gets rolling, one of the highest priorities on the 'to-do' list is getting winter wheat or other small grains planted as soon as possible. The temptation is strong to get the drill across the field quickly and "just get it done". But before you do that, take a moment to consider what can give your wheat crop the best chance for top yields in 2012.

The Illinois Agronomy Handbook states that yield goals are attainable when a wheat plant gets enough growth in the fall to reach the 3 leaf stage and forms 2 or 3 tillers. When the plant reaches this stage, it is producing sugars that are stored in the crown, which act as antifreeze protecting the plant from winter kill as cold temperatures move in. Therefore our goals for that plant should be to (1) make sure it can grow quickly enough for sugar production to occur, and (2) form tillers that will ultimately become grain heads.

FIVE TIPS TO SUCCESS

1. Prepare the Seedbed Like any other seed in the grass family, wheat requires a firm seedbed with good seed to soil contact. Whether you use tillage or not, a good drill with solid closers is critical. Be sure to check the

depth settings on the drill; seeds planted below 1-1/2 inches will take longer to emerge, and less than 1 inch results in a shallow crown more susceptible to winter kill.

2. Treat the Seed Just as with spring crops, beneficial microbes play key roles in enabling the seedling to sprout and jump out of the ground. **Myco Seed Treat™** has been a winner, consistently adding 3-4 bushels to the final yield just by improving early seedling vigor and growth. A number of growers around the Midwest have commented how consistent and vibrant the emergence of the stand is when they use **Myco Seed Treat™**.

3. Put Biology to Work Using biological products to place large populations of beneficial organisms in the seedbed and on the foliage after emergence can kick nutrient cycling into high gear and make maximum use of “leftover” nutrients in the soil as well as from added nutrition. Maximum efficiency is the key to a crop’s great start, and microorganisms are king when it comes to nutrient cycling. Adding **SP-1™**, **Bio Aid**, or **Residue™** to a fall fertility application is a simple way to reap the most benefits from biological life.

4. Feed the Microbes Another component of these applications should be food sources for the biology. Carbons, sugars, enzymes and nutrients all provide food for microbes, stimulating lots of activity. Blends including **Starter Blend**, **Pillar 11**, **Residue™ Plus Liquid**, and **Activator II** are excellent buffets for the biology provided by **SP-1™** and other microbial packages, but not in excess to where the organisms become overfed and lazy.

5. Supply Fertility

• ***One of the primary nutrients required for early growth of a small grain is phosphorus.*** Like corn, wheat requires available phosphorus for vigorous initial growth. Since the growth window is very narrow in the fall, ensuring the plant gets available phosphorus quickly is even more critical. Conventional wisdom has been to apply dry phosphates, such as 18-46-0, or manures and call it good. In soils with high P tests, it is tempting to not apply anything and rely on the soil levels to get the job done. However, when time is short, a high percentage of those dry fertilizers or natural sources just aren’t available to the plant fast enough. Consider applying a liquid starter mix, like **Starter Blend**, **4-21-4**, **AgriBoost PK**, **Pillar 11**, or **Drammatic O** fish to provide an immediate source of P to the plant and get it growing.

• ***How much nitrogen is needed in the fall?*** University of Illinois research has shown that a wheat crop uses 30 to 40 pounds of nitrogen in

the fall to get established. When adding nitrogen to the fertilizer mix, take credit for higher organic matter soils, a previous legume crop, and any N in other products. Many times 5-7 gallons of additional 28% N (or equivalent) will get the job done.

• ***Another plus is the inclusion of a balanced package of micronutrients***, including manganese, copper, zinc and sulfur, all of which provide key roles in early development of the grain plant. **Starter Blend, AgriBoost PK** and **Pillar 11** provide these in the blend, or a micronutrient package like **Trace Pak** can be added.

Contact your AgriEnergy Resources representative to get the ball rolling on your 2012 wheat and small grain crops today!

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