



Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership – Cover Crop Guide #2

What to Expect when Aerially Seeding Cover Crops



1. Aerial application can allow for a more timely application because it can be flown into a standing crop. This gives the cover crop additional time for growth before the killing frost.
2. Sufficient sunlight is essential for cover crops to establish successfully. Aerially apply cover crops when about 50 percent of the sunlight can reach the ground between the rows. Consider aerial seeding starting in mid to late August. After corn black layers and has sunlight on the ground or soybeans are starting to turn yellow is the time to seed. Contact your aerial applicator early in the summer.

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3. Aerial applicators aim for the middle section of the field and must leave a buffer around the edges to avoid drift onto adjacent landowners, especially in windy conditions. This may result in the end rows and edges having less coverage and should be expected.
4. Adequate rainfall in the two weeks following application is also key to getting cover crop seed into the ground and germinated. Try to time application with the next rainfall in mind.



5. Above ground cover crop growth is most beneficial at a medium level. A thick, lush carpet of cover crops is not the ideal because it could create management issue in dealing with high amounts of residue. A seemingly sparse cover will still have significant root growth which provides more of the soil health benefits than the above ground growth.

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6. **Maintaining realistic expectations for how successful cover crop coverage, establishment, and growth will look is an important part of cover crop management.**
7. **Aerially seeding cover crops can be a faster and easier method for getting cover crops established but may result in less precise coverage.**



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