

# COVER CROPS

Greenholm Farms Ltd,  
Embrow, Ontario

## Goals of cover crops

- Reduce soil erosion
- Take up nutrients from manure
- Slow surface runoff
- Provide alternative feed in dairy operation

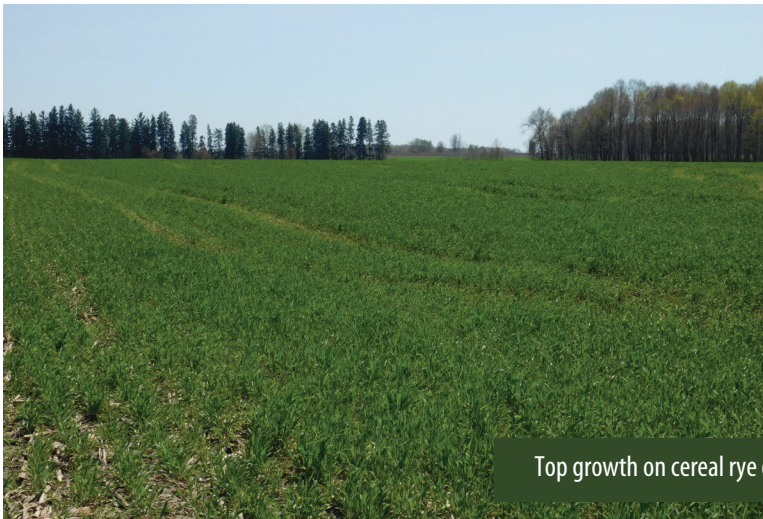
**The Green family has found the value in cover crops by harvesting covers as feed and increasing soil health.**

## Cereal Rye following Silage Corn

- Planted late October following corn silage
  - Drilled at 80 lbs/ac
  - Cut and harvested in spring for feed
- Remaining residue is strip tilled in spring
- Cereal rye terminated with Roundup when corn crop emerges



Increasing soil aggregation can decrease erosion, promote infiltration and reduce compaction.



Top growth on cereal rye one month apart (April and May).

## Oat Cover

- Planted following winter wheat harvest
- Harvested in the fall for feed for dairy heifers
- Remaining 2 inches of oat cover is frost killed
- Nutrients removed with the oat during harvest and have to be added back to fields
  - Manure applied following wheat harvest or after oat has begun to emerge

## Greenholm Farms has experimented with different seeding methods:

- Seed spun on with Herd Spreader - found the cover to be non-uniform
- Seeding with fertilizer spreader - resulted in an insufficient catch
- Interseeding into silage corn with Herd Spreader - resulted in an unsuccessful catch
- Considering broadcasting cereal rye following soybean harvest

**Drilling the cover crop seed provides a uniform cover and thick stand due to the increased soil-seed contact in late fall.**



Above and belowground biomass of oat cover before harvest.



**“Determine the scale where you can use covers efficiently. Use covers on the number of acres that you can effectively manage to make it work for you.”**

**Harvesting the oat cover in the fall and cereal rye in the spring provides feed every 6 months.**

## For more information:

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