Silo Buster Forage Mixture

Silo Buster is a forage mixture comprised of 50% Climbing Forage Peas, 25% Spring Triticale and 25% Forage Barley.

Preparation

Prepare a smooth seed bed to ease accurate seeding. Avoid surface trash unless proper no till seeding is used with appropriate equipment and an experienced operator.

Planting

Sow 2-2 ½ units per acre, ½ - 1" depth. Do not seed deeper than 1' and sow as early as possible in the spring. The later part of April is ideal. Underseed with your normal hay or grass mix at the usual rate. For the proper amount of seed per acre start by setting the drill as if you were planting 120 lbs. of wheat.
Feed quality and yield will suffer if less than 100 lbs./acre are planted. Fertilizer requirements are approximately 60 lbs. N, 30 lbs. P, and 60 lbs. K in the absence of a soil test.

Silo Buster really comes into its own when its values as a nurse crop are examined. After quick emergence, Silo Buster develops more slowly than most nurse crops, allowing the underseeding to develop strong vigorous seedlings. When harvest is about three weeks away, Silo Buster grows very rapidly resulting in lots of high quality feed (approximately 7-9 ½ tonnes wet weight per acre). The peas in the mixture provide large amounts of nitrogen through heavy nodulation, if sufficient climbing pea inoculant is mixed with the seed.

Harvest

Harvest 55-70 days (depending on your area) from seeding but weather can accelerate or delay harvest. Remember the calendar is only a guide. Depending on weather conditions the grain may be further ahead of the peas than usual. Please note: With good weather, the grain (triticale and barley) will go from Zadok's scale #39 to #55 (head half emerged) in about 4 ½ days. If the crop is harvested at 'head in boot' stage, you should realize a protein level of over 20% but a lesser yield of total crop. If you want milk, cut when you see hair on the grain.

Best tonnage-protein compromise will be realized by harvesting just before heads start to show on the triticale. Do not pay attention to the maturity of the peas. After, this tonnage will increase but protein and palatability decrease somewhat. If harvested at the above stage, Silo Buster will have protein levels from 16-22% and good palatability. High levels of sugars and soluble carbohydrates in the leaves and stems result in a sweet taste. Cattle respond well to this high level of palatability.

If you desire lots of feed and don't require as much protein, leave cutting until the grain is at stage #55. This will not cause a drastic drop in quality and for anyone using the feed for dry cows or beef cattle will result in more weight. Harvesting after the heads of the grain are fully emerged results in lower quality feed.

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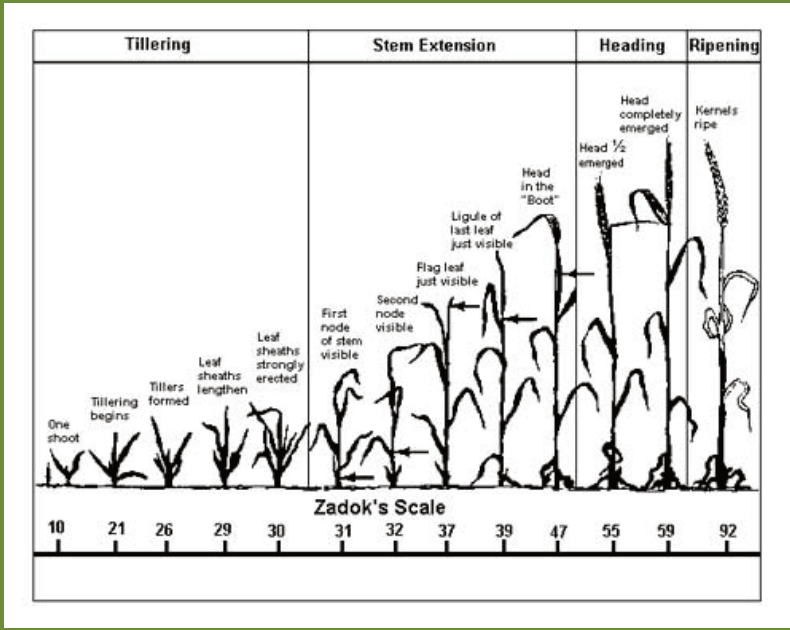
Remember that if you don't cut at stage #47 and the weather turns, you will end up a few days later with a crop that is too mature. As well, cutting the crop at stage #47 will pack into a silo better and the silo unloader will work much more to the operators' satisfaction. The grower will have a much better chance for an excellent crop of forage as second cut and you can also avoid lodging.

Silo Buster that is harvested into a silo or wrapped in bales has to be the proper moisture to make good feed. After the crop is swathed it is extremely important to time the harvest correctly. The length of time needed to dry to silage stage is quite rapid in good drying weather, but high humidity with very little breeze slows drying time drastically. The riper the crop before cutting, the less time should elapse before harvesting. With normal weather conditions and good soil fertility, Silo Buster will give you a lot of high quality feed early in the year and allow an outstanding catch of underseeding as well.

In the last few years, Silo Buster is being used in a new way as an excellent green manure crop after fall planted cereals. After harvest when the straw is spread or removed, the soil can be worked up and planted or Silo Buster can be no tilled right into the stubble. A few producers have added 6-8 pounds of clover. The resulting crop can be pastured, cut for haylage, or simply worked into the soil.

CEREAL GROWTH STAGES

This shows the cereal crop development according to the "Zadok's Scale"



These stages are critical in many management decisions that growers make. Nitrogen and herbicide applications must be completed during the tillering stage; disease control is most critical in the stem extension and heading stage. Knowing the growth stage of the crop is essential to accurately schedule management inputs and control measures.

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