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Unseeded Acres: What To Do Now?

Driving around Southwestern Ontario, it's still a strange feeling to see many fields sit empty. But given the planting conditions this past spring, producers were faced with making a tough decision: try and mud a crop in (which could lead to more problems down the road) or take the Unseeded Acre Benefit (USAB) for their fields. Now that the June 15th deadline has long passed, some of these unseeded fields are starting to look like breeding grounds for next year's weed seed supply. Despite it being August of 2019, start your 2020 crop off on the right path by keeping your fields clean. In order to plan for your weed management programs in these fields, you must ask yourself: wheat or no wheat here in 2020?

Wheat in 2020

With the unseeded acres on your farm, they present an awesome opportunity: early planted winter wheat! However, before you go and load up with seed on September 10th there are a few things to consider: cover crops, weed management in the now and optimum planting date. Cover crop selection is no easy task, as each crop that can be used comes with a list of pros and cons. In a scenario of wanting to plant wheat this fall, select a cover crop with a short life cycle and that can be terminated easily before planting wheat; it is recommended that you kill off any cover crop 14 days ahead of planting. If you are a livestock producer in need of a little more feed, oats and peas make for a great summer cover crop to harvest some "cow chow" from, while also suppressing any weeds in these fields before you replant wheat this fall.

Should you opt to not plant a cover crop in your bare fields this August, consider using a combination of tillage and chemical management to keep your fields clean before wheat planting. Products like glyphosate, Enlist Duo (a combination of 2,4-D choline and glyphosate) and Eragon LQ can all be used ahead of planting wheat. Should you be the unlucky recipient of having Fleabane as a tenant in your fields, Infinity is registered for a **POST** fall application in wheat (**NOTE:** this is not to be confused with **Infinity FX**, which only has registration for spring applications).

Having said all of this, it is also important to recognize what geography you farm in. Figure 1 represents the Optimum Planting Zones (OPZ) for the province of Ontario. Anyone planting wheat outside of these dates may find themselves faced with a challenge: too early and your wheat crop is subject to diseases like Barley Yellow Dwarf Virus. Too late past these dates and the wheat crop may struggle to establish itself and survive the winter. Ultimately if you are planning on early wheat getting in, try to stay within these dates but should you get the urge to plant earlier, do not go any further than 10 days before the suggested OPZ date.

No Wheat & No Weeds

No wheat in these bare fields? No problem. Treat these fields with the same care as listed above; to help suppress the weed pressure, include a cover crop that will easily be winter killed and leave your field ready for corn or soybeans in the spring. Should you choose to not include a cover crop and opt for a chemical solution, Distinct is an option. This product leaves you with flexible planting options if applied in the fall and can be tank mixed with Roundup to tackle tough weeds.

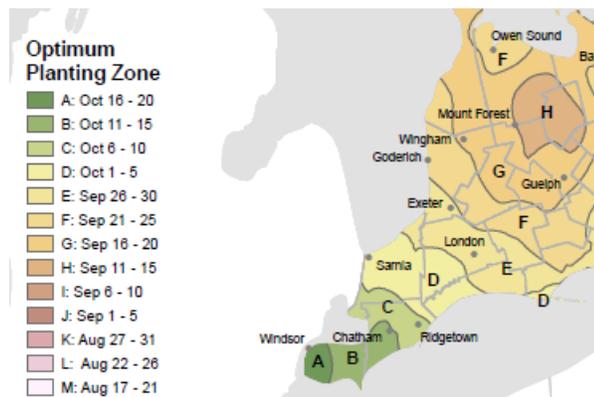


Figure 1 – The Optimum Planting Zones for Southwestern Ontario. This tool provides wheat growers with the recommended planting date range for each production geography.