Long Term Grain Rotation Plan

An East Tennessee Solution

By Osage

This plan is taken from the experience of an acquaintance living in Sevier County in eastern TN. He adapted it from a similar plan used by an Amish group he met in PA. It is for the growing of oats, wheat, and corn (maize). Oats are primarily used for horses and cattle, wheat for humans and chickens, and corn for all listed plus other species. It is a two-year rotation schedule. No mention was made of letting the land lie fallow, though this aspect is easily included into any rotation schedule (see below).

The Plan

Year 1:

Spring: Plow under crimson clover cover crop and plant corn.

August - September: Harvest corn. Plow or harrow field.

October - November: Plant wheat and oats in separate areas.

Year 2:

March - April: Overplant kobe lespedeza (sp?) in wheat and oats.

July - August: Harvest wheat and oats.

September: Harvest lespedeza hay. Add manure. Plow or harrow.

October: Plant crimson clover cover crop.

Notes:

My source says he drills the grain in rather than broadcasting it.

Oats are planted at the rate of nearly 3 bushels per acre.

Fallowing

Fallowing is the practice of letting the land lie idle (normally for one year out of seven) to rejuvenate itself. Fallowed land must not be allowed to become overrun by weeds, so a cover crop is normally used. This plan uses rejuvenating cover crops as part of the rotation, so fallowing should not be necessary. My source reports that he never truly fallowed the land, letting the cover crops build up the soil. In fact he reported that after only five years of use the soil was noticeably improved and after twenty years the soil was nearly the best soil on his farm.

Within this plan fallowed land could be used to raise lespedeza and clover seed, making the plan almost completely self-sustaining. A possible fallowing plan sketch is shown below. Divide the grain patch into two plots and (at right angles) into seven strips. The land in Plot A is planted in corn in even years and small grain (oats & wheat) in odd years. Plot B is planted in small grain in even years and corn in odd years.

Plot A	Plot B
Fallow in year 1	Fallow in year 1
Fallow in year 2	Fallow in year 2
Fallow in year 3	Fallow in year 3
Fallow in year 4	Fallow in year 4
Fallow in year 5	Fallow in year 5
Fallow in year 6	Fallow in year 6
Fallow in year 7	Fallow in year 7