

Forage Crops After Wholecrop

If silage supplies are tight then taking a cereal crop as wholecrop in the beginning of August addresses this but also opens up an opportunity to further tackle feed shortages in the 'shoulders' of the winter. Forage brassica crops such as stubble turnips and Italian ryegrass will be the preferred crops to sow. Hybrid kale/rapes can also provide autumn feed supplies but need to in by the end of July. At £2/kg Italian ryegrass is a cheap crop to establish and can provide both autumn and spring grazing

Stubble Turnips

Highest yields are achieved when sown in June/July after a silage cut but they are being increasingly used for autumn sowing on cereal stubbles – getting in a few weeks earlier after wholecrop cereal can make a huge difference compared to after a combined crop and if in early and growing are worth fertilising. They grow best at a pH of 6.5 so choose your fields carefully. Just lightly disc after harvest to retain moisture, drill at 12 kg/ac or broadcast at 20 kg/ha, possibly a bit more if conditions are dry. Fertilise with 75 kg N/ha. and 40 kg each of P and K for a full crop. Slurry can reduce fertiliser costs eg 2000 gal/ac. They will give highest yields if utilised after 100 days. Thus if sown in early August are ready from 1st November. Rondo, Samson and Delilah are high yielding and can be used for extending the grazing season of cattle in dry areas or to finish lambs. Ewes can pick over them whilst being supplemented with silage on a sacrifice area prior to housing to fully utilise the crop.

Rape/Kale Hybrids

These are best sown up to the last week of July. These are an alternative to stubble turnips and are a bit more winter hardy so last longer into the winter and are easy to utilise as the material is mainly leaf and stem. However they are a bit more catchy sown after the end of July. They can be used to extend the grazing season of sheep or cattle, strip graze with added silage for cattle to make up 50% of DM fed.

More Grass

If wanting spring grazing and putting the field back into wholecrop next year consider using Italian ryegrass at 6 – 8 kg/ac. Graze from 6 – 8 weeks, do not poach and there will also be some useful grazing in early spring.

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