Cover Crops in Corn

By JOHN STROM

MANY farmers are finding they can save soil, make more profit by planting cover crops.

**Cover Crops in Corn**

**March cereal cover grown in corn. Cereal 9-inches high.**

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**Ludlow cereal cover planted and grown in corn.**

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“Our burning average for getting more grain in 36-inch corn rows is 300 bushels, but we have no evidence to indicate it’s a benefit (relative to the cost). In fact, our experience is that the worst thing you can do is cut off the grain, then go in and take it all out,” he says.

David Barlow, a agronomist at the University of Kentucky, says using cover crops in corn can improve soil health and reduce erosion.

**How They Work**

K.C. Rolph, a agronomist at the University of Kentucky, says using cover crops in corn can improve soil health and reduce erosion.

**How They Work**

Rolph says they work by:

1. **Reducing Nitrates:** When cover crops are planted in the fall, they fix nitrogen from the atmosphere, reducing the need for synthetic fertilizers.
2. **Improving Water Use:** Cover crops help retain soil moisture, reducing the need for irrigation.
3. **Building Soil Structure:** Cover crops help break down soil clods, improving aeration and water penetration.
4. **Adding Organic Matter:** Cover crops add organic matter to the soil, improving soil health and fertility.

**What the Future Holds**

Rolph says the future of cover crops in corn is promising, with more research and development needed to improve their effectiveness.

“With the current focus on sustainability and environmental stewardship, cover crops in corn have a bright future,” he says.

**Conclusion**

Cover crops in corn are a promising practice for farmers looking to improve soil health and increase yields. By integrating cover crops into their rotation, farmers can reduce costs, increase yields, and improve the overall health of their soil. As research continues, we can expect cover crops in corn to play an even more important role in sustainable agriculture.