

Dakota

FARMER

A Penton® Publication

Propane shortage? Page 3



High-speed planter
Pages 22-23

Year-round calving Page 50

Rx for soil health

SOIL SAVVY: Mark Weinheimer examines wheat stubble that he has seeded to a cover crop. He hopes to be able to increase yields and cut costs by upping the biological activity in his soil.



PHOTO: NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE SOUTH DAKOTA

By LON TONNESON

MARK Weinheimer of Synergy Farms, Pierre, S.D., is banking on soil health to reduce input costs and increase crop yields.

He farms about 2,500 acres in central South Dakota and grows winter wheat, corn and sunflowers in a wheat-corn-sunflowers-corn rotation.

To increase the diversity and numbers

of soil organisms living in his cropland, he seeds a cover-crop mix in midsummer after he harvests winter wheat, and in early spring before he plants sunflowers. His spring cover-crop cocktail consists of oats, mustard, vetch, lentils, turnips and annual ryegrass. In the fall, he seeds a flax, pea, turnip, radish, lentil and vetch mixture.

The goal is to keep the soil covered and live roots growing in the soil as long

as possible. The cover-crop mix planted after wheat grows from July or August until freeze-up. The cover-crop mix in the spring grows from April or May until sometime in June, when he plants sunflower.

Though he doesn't have cattle, Weinheimer recently converted some of his cropland to grassland. He fenced off about 75 acres and created four paddocks for grazing. He rents out the land to a neighbor. "I am comparing how quick

we can build back organic matter in that system compared to a cropping system," he says.

Weinheimer is also experimenting with pollinator and insect habitat. He planted strips of annual and perennial plants on two sides of all of his grain fields to attract beneficial insects and pollinators.

"It looks very promising," he says.

■ Read more on pages 4-5.

PREPARE. STRIKE. CONTROL.
THE POWER OF COBRA™

COBRA
HERBICIDE

VALENT Products That Work. From People Who Care® | valent.com | 800-6-VALENT (682-5368)
Always read and follow label instructions.

The Power of Cobra is a trademark and Cobra and Products That Work, From People Who Care are registered trademarks of Valent U.S.A. Corporation. Roundup Ready PLUS is a trademark of Monsanto Company. See RoundupReadyPLUS.com for details.
©2014 Valent U.S.A. Corporation. All rights reserved. 12M-1235

ROUNDUP READY PLUS
HERBICIDE

EARN \$3 PER ACRE
See your dealer or RoundupReadyPLUS.com