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No Till Crimper Roller Experiment



We have had numerous enquiries about using the No Till Crimper Roller method to terminate cover crops, and we learnt some important 'do's and 'don'ts' during our experiment at Honeydale Farm (now FarmED) a few years ago.

As the name implies, the Crimper Roller offers a way of terminating cover crops with no till; by avoiding the need for spraying, mowing and ploughing, it's a much cheaper and faster method. It relies on having a bulky cover crop which is then crushed at the correct growth stage, the flattened plants forming a mulch on top of the soil which keeps weeds at bay and allowing new seeds to be direct drilled through the mulch.

The trick is to find the 'Goldilocks Moment' when the plants are just right to terminate, in other words when they are old enough to remain flat once rolled, but not too old that they have seeded out.

In our first film, we rolled one trial strip of our winter cover crop of rye and vetch, but as we suspected, we were a little too early.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nx8A9_2Q2mA

We repeated the process weekly until we determined the correct stage to terminate.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-RcMH_tmPs

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cpNUmTfh68&t=1s

In the delayed 4th episode of our crimper roller experiment, we finally found a warm, dry day to give it another go, now that our crop was further down the line. In the video Sam Lane talks about how successful the roller was this time round and compares the freshly flattened part of the crop with one of the previously crimped areas.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZM6j8BpxAyY&t=51s

Finally we try the second part of the experiment, direct drilling a mix of seeds into the crimped 'mulch'. We learnt that the type of drill is important and that those with coulters rather than discs can struggle with drilling through the 'trash' or mulch of the original cover crop.

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