

# THE FORAGER

*Agronomics with livestock in mind!*

## **GROWING TRICAL® 336 WINTER TRITICALE**

Late summer and early fall planting opportunities will soon be here. This is an excellent time of year to promote the benefits of seed products that can aid forage inventories prior to the onset of winter! TRITICALE is one of those outstanding seed products. TRITICALE is a hybrid cross of wheat and rye, producing an excellent and functional feedstuff. Check out this winter variety!

**Planting:** Winter triticale can be planted anytime from late-August to mid-October. One of the most dependable winter triticale products is TriCal® 336, which is not susceptible to Hessian fly, leaf rust or powdery mildew like wheat, so early planting is not an issue. Generally, earlier planting allows time for more tillering, which will result in higher spring forage yields. At moderate seeding rates, winter triticale can also be used as a nurse crop for summer hay seedings. Though seeding depth of triticale is not as critical as with some seeds, optimum yields are best achieved by uniform planting with a drill at 1-2 inches deep at a rate of 100-125 lbs per acre. Adjustment of the drill setting for a proper rate will be necessary. A good starting place is to set the drill 10% higher than a 120 lb/acre wheat setting. If a drill is not readily available, broadcasting at the higher rate with light incorporation and rolling is usually acceptable.

**Fertility:** Triticale can handle lower pH and mineral deficiencies better than many crops, but excels with good fertility. Basic amounts of N, P, & K are needed to establish a vigorous stand in the fall, when seeding the winter variety TriCal® 336. A starter package of commercial fertilizer containing 20-25 lbs of nitrogen and phosphorus plus potassium, according to soil test, may be used. Alternatively, an application of manure prior to planting will serve the young crop's needs and provide a good opportunity to relieve some of the pressure for winter manure storage space. Manure use also helps with nutrient management by using on-farm nutrients rather than importing them, further reducing the cost of fall-planted seeds. TriCal® 336 will use 100-150 lbs of nitrogen in the spring to reach maximum yield potential and quality. Nitrogen should be applied at the time of crop green-up. While in some cases, a late winter or early spring application of manure may be possible to supply some of the nitrogen, the total needs cannot be met from manure alone. A fertilizer blend using some ammonium sulfate may help boost the protein level of the forage as well.

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**Superior Nutrient Management Capabilities:** TriCal® 336 offers a valuable, additional benefit of being extremely efficient in trapping and utilizing soil nutrients that can contribute to ground water and stream contamination. Studies at the University of Idaho (*Brown & Gibson, 1999-2001*) demonstrated the superior ability of winter triticale to remove phosphorus from the soil following a corn silage crop. Their results showed that winter triticale removed nearly 3X more phosphorus than spring wheat (27lbs/acre vs. 9.7lbs/acre) and was effective in reducing soil test phosphorus. The winter triticale also produced superior yields compared to other small grains. Work done at the University of Maryland (*Coale et al., 1999*) to assess the ability of different small grains to accumulate residual soil nitrogen also demonstrated the superior capabilities of winter triticale. The studies conducted at two locations for 2 years compared triticale, rye, wheat and barley at several nitrogen levels. The triticale consistently exhibited superior nitrogen accumulation at each rate. In fact, at Quantico (1998) under the high nitrogen rate, triticale accumulated nearly 100 lbs/acre of N, while rye accumulated just 50lbs/acre.

**Harvesting:** Trical® 336 should be harvested at the boot stage - when the flag leaf is emerged but NO heads are showing. Under normal conditions, it takes triticale 7-10 days to mature from growth stage 8 to growth stage 10. This provides a window of harvest, which offers flexibility to dodge adverse weather and still get forage with energy levels comparable to corn silage. Under typical conditions, TriCal® 336 will be ready for harvest just before cool season grasses and in time for mid-season corn planting or sequential BMR sorghum-sudan planting. A harvest schedule where the triticale is cut first then grasses and finally alfalfa allows each crop to be harvested at peak quality and placed in the same bunk with little or no break between harvests. Triticale should be mowed into a full-width swath to speed drying to 65%-70% moisture for chopping. Use of a forage inoculant is recommended as a very good management practice to help maintain feed value by ensuring proper fermentation.

*(Edited from an article by AgriCulver Seeds)*

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