



# Creating wildlife habitat with cover crops

*New Habitat Opportunities On Existing Cropland Acres*

## Why Cover Crops?

For years, cover crops have been used for their agro-nomic benefits. Currently Farmers use them to build organic matter, capture nutrients and reduce soil erosion. As more landowners start to use cover crops they have noticed that deer, pheasants and other wildlife often use these areas as a source of additional food and cover.

### Some specific examples of how land-owners have used cover crops for wildlife include:

1. Planting a mix of warm season broad-leaves and grasses (sunflowers, buck-wheat, millet) over a small pothole that was too wet to plant in the spring. By establishing dense overhead cover, hens could safely forage for insects with their young chicks creating valuable brood rearing cover.
2. Planting brassicas such as turnips and radishes after wheat harvest. When November arrives deer congregate to the cover crop feeding on the leaves and giant taproots providing a dependable food source throughout the winter months.

## Where and when should I plant cover crops?

- After harvesting small grains or silage
- In mid-summer on any prevent plant or un-planted acres
- As an annual food or “brood” plot

Cover crops can be easily established with a drill or broadcast seeder. Seed mixes range from \$15-\$30 an acre depending on the species included. There are dozens of cover crop species and varieties each serving a different purpose for wildlife and soil health.

Single species can be used on their own, however multi-species mixes or “cocktails” (seen above) provide the most beneficial cover for wildlife and result in greater soil health benefits. Landowners are encouraged to experiment and find what works best for them.

## Who can help?

The following agencies and organizations have certain programs or assistance for land owners interested in trying cover crops:

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (EQIP, CSP)
- South Dakota Game Fish and Parks (Food Plot Program)
- Local Pheasants Forever Chapters (Habitat Project Funds)

If you are interested in starting a wildlife friendly cover crop project start by contacting your local Pheasants Forever Biologist. See our staff listing on the back of this brochure.

# South Dakota Pheasants Forever Staff

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Existing Cropland Acres Await!***

