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# Checklist for Establishing Creeping Red Fescue Seed Crops



## CRF Varieties:

- \* Demand for Boreal or common seed from Boreal has decreased.
- \* New varieties are being promoted by seed companies and are grown under contract.
- \* Ensure seed yield data on these varieties is available before growing them.
- \* Seed yield data on some varieties can be found at [www.peaceforageseed.ca](http://www.peaceforageseed.ca).

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## Background

Early seeding and weed control are keys to successful creeping red fescue seed stand establishment. Late October as a dormant seeding or early May seeding without the use of a

cover crop ensures there is sufficient time for fescue plants to develop prior to winter ensuring a large seed crop the following year.

### Field Selection

Creeping red fescue should be established in fields that are relatively free of perennial weeds and other volunteer grass crops. Canada thistle, toadflax, quack grass, foxtail barley, volunteer forage grasses, dandelions and volunteer clovers are examples of perennial weeds that can cause problems in fescue seed crops. It is also strongly recommended to seed fescue on fields which were in canola the previous year.

### Fertilizer at Seeding

Soil test prior to seeding to know levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium and sulphur. Phosphorous applied at time of seeding ranges from 25-50 lbs/acre but depends on the levels present in the soil. Nitrogen (20-30 lbs/acre) should also be applied at seeding to sustain growth through the summer until fall nitrogen is applied. Most of the fertilizer used at time of seeding should be placed away from the seed.

### Seeding

Seed directly into canola stubble without a cover crop. Direct seeding into canola stubble provides a good firm seed bed for shallow seeding, excellent soil moisture conditions, surface residues to reduce the risk of crusting and most importantly less competition from volunteer cereals and wild oats.

### Seeding Rates

Fescue grown for one production year is seeded at 5 lbs/acre. Fescue seeded for two production years is seeded at 1-3 lbs/acre. Row spacing is generally 8 to 12 inches depending on the seed drill. As a rule of thumb narrow row spacings and high seeding rates are used when growing for one year of seed production. Wider row spacings and lower seeding rates are used when growing seed for two production years.

### Pre-seed Herbicides

A herbicide must be applied prior to seeding fescue directly into annual crop stubble. In most cases a broad-leaved herbicide tank mixed with glyphosate improves broad-leaved weed control and controls volunteer Roundup Ready canola. Pre-seed herbicides that are registered for use prior to seeding fescue include:

- 1) Glyphosate
- 2) Glyphosate+MCPA ester
- 3) Pre-Pass XC
- 4) Glyphosate+Express SG

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[www.peaceforageseed.ca](http://www.peaceforageseed.ca)

### □ Seedling Herbicides

Controlling weeds early, quickly and effectively is critical for good fescue establishment. Herbicide applications are generally made after the 2 leaf stage but will require a second application if additional weeds are present. Table 1 provides an outline of what herbicides can be considered for controlling weeds in seedling creeping red fescue stands.

### □ Fall Herbicide Applications

A September herbicide application should be considered and is effective at controlling a number of winter annual and perennial weeds. Fall spraying with the proper herbicide is also effective at controlling Group 2 resistant narrow-leaved hawks'beard which is commonly found in fields of long term fescue growers. The herbicide used will depend on the weeds present and crop tolerance. 2,4, D should not be used in the fall of the year of seeding fescue as seed yields the following year have been reduced. Table 2 shows several herbicides that can be considered for September applications on creeping red fescue seed stands and some of the weeds that will be controlled. Curtail M or Prestige XC have proven to be the most effective herbicides for fall spraying of Canada thistle in creeping red fescue seed fields but the control is inconsistent.

### □ Insects

Grasshoppers can cause severe damage to seedling fescue stands. Stands can be eliminated very quickly. If grasshoppers begin to cause damage to the stand control measures such as insecticide applications should be made.

Table 1. Herbicides on seedling creeping red fescue.

Broadleaved Herbicides		Grassy Weed Herbicides	
Registered	Potential*	Registered	Potential*
Attain XC	Barricade	Achieve L	Axial
Banvel II	Curtail M	Assure II	Horizon
Basagran	Dyvel DS	Poast Ultra	Puma 120 Super
Buctril M	Enforcer M		
Embutox	Frontline XL		
Infinity	Stellar		
Lontrel 360			
MCPA			
Pardner			
Prestige XC			
Refine SG			
Spectrum			
Target			
2,4-D			
Tropotox Plus			

\*The products that show potential are not registered. These products are currently being tested but results are limited at this point in time. The information is to be used as a guide only and is the information available at the time of printing.

### □ Fall Fertility

Apply nitrogen in October prior to the ground freezing. Rates of nitrogen are generally 60-80 lbs/acre. Higher rates of nitrogen are used if only one seed crop is expected. Soil testing and analysis is used to determine if other nutrients are required.

### □ Summary

Seeding early, direct seeding into canola stubble without using a cover crop, minimizing weed competition and using a good fertility program will ensure successful establishment. Uniform stands with well developed fescue plants prior to winter will result in high seed yields the following year.

Table 2. Herbicide options and weed control ratings for fall spraying of creeping red fescue seed fields.

Herbicide	NLHB*	NLHB* (group 2 resistant)	Volunteer Clover	Dandelion	Canada Thistle	Rough Cinquefoil
Curtail M	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Poor to Fair	Excellent
Prestige	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Fair	Poor to Fair	Excellent
Spectrum	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Very Good	Poor to Fair	Fair
Ally	Excellent	Poor	Very Good	Excellent	Poor	Poor

**Compiled by:** Calvin Yoder and Talon Johnson in March 2015.

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