RESULTS

In October, there were higher than average temperatures and precipitation allowing for adequate and germination during the experiment. The month of November and December also brought warm temperatures allowing the winter rye to grow throughout the fall months.

Table 2. Summarized weather data for Borderview Farm Alburgh, VT, 2010 and 2011

South Hero (Alburgh)	Oct. 2010	Nov. 2010	Dec. 2010	Jan. 2011	Feb. 2011	Mar. 2011	Apr. 2011l	May 2011
Average Temperature (°F)	50.6	39.9	27.7	22.8	20.8	32.9	46.6	58.7
Departure from Normal*	1.8	2.2	2.3	4.6	0.5	2.1	3.1	2.1
Precipitation (inches)	6.73	2.93	3.39	0.90	3.12	3.39	7.88	8.67
Departure from Normal	3.75	0.00	1.52	-1.05	1.71	1.07	5.00	5.35
Growing Degree Days (base 32°F)	578	243	17.1	0.0	0.0	144.2	465	826
Departure from Normal	57.4	63.4	12.4	0.0	0.0	27.9	120	63.6

*Based on 30 year historical averages.

Impact of Planting Date

April measurements of ground cover indicated that the 5-October planting date provided the most soil coverage (Table 3). As the spring progressed the winter rye produced more biomass allowing for significant soil coverage by early May. The 5 and 14 of October planting dates still yielded the best soil coverage well over 80%. Soil temperature was only slightly impacted by winter rye planting date. Interestingly in early April the soil temperature was warmest where there was more ground coverage. The 5 and 14 of October planting dates yield the most dry matter per acre (Table 4; Figure 1). The late October planting date yielded 63% less than the early October date. The 5 and 14 of October planting dates also produced the most plant biomass nitrogen per acre. More than 70 lbs of plant biomass N per acre would be recycled into the soil for the subsequent crop.

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Table 4. Impact of planting date on winter rye dry matter and nitrogen yield in spring of 2011.

Planting date	Dry matter yield	Plant biomass nitrogen	
	lbs/acre	%	lbs/acre

*Results those are not significantly different that the top performers in a particular column are indicated with an asterisk.
NA- Statistical analysis not completed on this portion of the data.

Figure 1. Impact of planting date on winter rye dry matter yields in spring of 2011.

Impact of Seeding Rate

Winter rye seeding rate significantly impacted the percentage of ground cover (Table 5). Seeding rates of 100, 125, and 150 lbs per acre resulted in significantly higher ground coverage when compared to 50 and 75 lb per acre seeding rates. There was no impact of seeding rate on soil temperature. The highest dry matter yields were obtained at seeding rates of 100, 125, and 150 lbs per acre. The higher biomass also translated into the greatest yield of nitrogen.

Table 5. Impact of winter rye seeding rate on ground cover and soil temperature.

Seeding rate	Ground cover		Soil temperature	
	4-12-11	**5-2-11**	**4-12-11**	**5-2-11**
	%		**°F**	
50	12.4	66.7	47.9	48.1
75	16.5	75.7	47.8	48.3
100	20.3*	80.8*	**48.7**	**48.4**
125	**25.4***	[redacted]	47.8	47.9
150	24.4*			

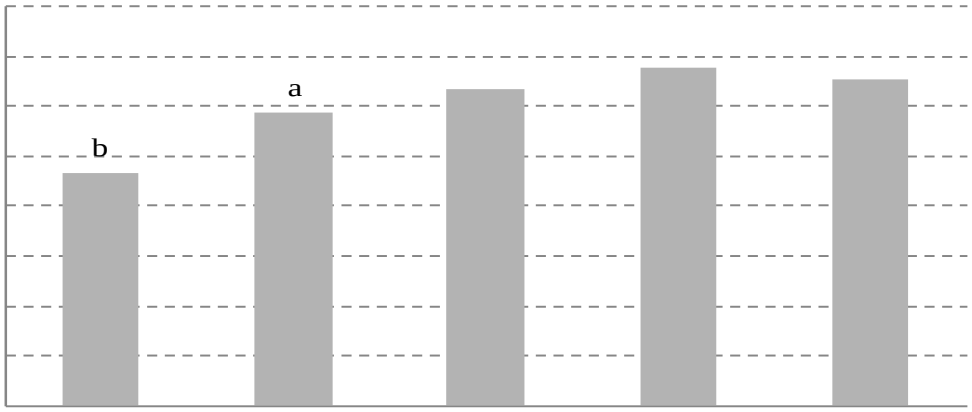

Figure 2. Impact of seeding rate on winter rye dry matter yields in spring of 2011.

DISCUSSION

Cover crop planting is important to reduce erosion throughout the non-growing season months. Cover cropping can also provide other benefits such as improved soil tilth and nitrogen for the subsequent crop. Based on this research the earlier the winter cover crop can be seeded the better ground coverage and more plant biomass that can be obtained from this critical practice. Late cover crop plantings will ultimately result in poor soil coverage and may not aide in reducing soil erosion. Seeding rates of at least 100 lbs per acre will also provide adequate coverage and yields. Increasing the seeding rate above 100 lbs per acre would be more costly and does not appear to provide any additional benefit to plant yield and ground coverage regardless of the planting date. It should be noted that these plots were broadcast seeded and hence lower seeding rates may be appropriate for drill seeding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UVM Extension would like to thank Roger Rainville and the staff at Borderview Farm for their generous help with this research trial. We would also like to acknowledge Crop and Soil Team members Amanda Gervais, Amber Domina, Laura Madden, Susan Monahan, Katie Blair, and Savanna Kittell-Mitchell.