

Duck Creek Watershed of Oklahoma

FARM #5

Rick Jeans farms 3,000 acres of grass and cropland in Kay County, Oklahoma. Rick is a third-generation farmer and began farming after he graduated from Oklahoma State University in 1981. He has served on the Kay County Conservation District board for over 25 years.

Rick and his wife Diane grow mostly soybeans, grain sorghum and winter wheat, and 500 acres of their operation is in pasture for 100 head of cattle. The operation has been no-till for about 30 years, and the pair have been using cover crops since about 2013.

“What got me into no-till was I had a neighbor down the road that had been doing some no-tilling of some soybeans; he was having really good results,” he said. Rick and his family started experimenting with the practice and saw success.

Rick and Diane got into cover crops around 2013 after a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Soil Scientist from Diane’s leadership class came to their farm and encouraged them to try the practice. That first year, they tried a concoction of triticale, barley, oats, wheat, soybeans, Austrian winter peas, vetch, turnip and radishes. “We liked what we saw enough that it was like, ‘Yes, let’s try it again’. We’ve been doing it ever since,” Rick said. Rick has tweaked his cover crop concoction a little bit, but still plants five or six different species each year.

“I think what’s benefited me more than anything was getting the water in the soil,” Rick said, “The infiltration has improved drastically.” He’s seen his soil come to life with earthworms, and his soil organic matter has increased in several of their fields. He also no longer experiences compaction issues. “With this soil health stuff, we just don’t see the problems we used to have,” he said.

Economically, his reduced labor costs mean he can spray many more acres in a day with his sprayer. To farmers interested in trying these practices, Rick says, “Take it slow. Get your feet under you, that way you know if this is going to work for you, and you can increase it in the future.”



View Rick’s interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TTNpprvViE>

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