



Jason Sey photo

FROST SEEDING FUSION Q&A

Pennsylvania expert Jason Say holds court
on this versatile blend.

■ by Scott Bestul

Jason Say is no stranger to *Whitetail News*. The Pennsylvania whitetail expert and land manager plants dozens of food plots each year, and he's an ardent believer in Whitetail Institute products. Among his many areas of expertise, Say believes frost seeding — particularly with the popular Fusion product — is one of the most important tools in his chest. We sat down with Say to get better insights on his approaches to this tactic.

Whitetail News: For Whitetail News readers who might not be familiar with frost seeding, how would you define the practice?

Say: “Frost seeding is broadcasting seed — most often clover — into an existing plot during the freeze-thaw cycle that typically occurs in late winter and early spring in the central and northern parts of the United States. It's been used by farmers for a long time, and in recent years has been picked up by food plotters. Frost seeding is generally thought to be a good way to introduce some new growth into an established plot, as well as fill in bare or thin spots where weeds can establish. Imperial Whitetail Clover is well-suited to frost seeding, and I've used it a lot, but the last few years, my go-to seed is Fusion.”

WN: What about Fusion makes it your favorite?

Say: “There's just something about that combination of clover and chicory that's very hard to beat. First, I've had really good luck getting it to germinate and establish if I time it right. And I've always been a huge advocate of offering variety to deer. There are times when they gravitate to the clover and others when they just wear the chico-

ry out. I'm not smart enough to know why they choose what they do and when. I just think deer instinctively know what they need at certain times of year, and they're also just curious and always sampling different plants to see what tastes good to them. Anyway, I've had so much luck with Fusion that I find it hard to go with straight clover if I have a choice.”

WN: When is the best time period for frost seeding in your area of Pennsylvania?

Say: “Of course, it depends on the year and the weather and winter we've had, but generally, March is my go-to time. Here in Pennsylvania, that's when we have that window of freezing nights and thawing days that allow the seed to work down into the soil as it experiences that heaving effect. I think anyone who lives in a similar climate or planting zone would have success at that time.

“Lately, I hear about more guys frost seeding when there's snow on the ground. I don't mind a combination of a little snow and bare dirt, but I think seeding into a significant snow is pretty risky. If you get a significant warmup and melt, you're going to get a lot of runoff and washing, and to me that's just a waste of seed that gets blown off the plot. I get it, though. Guys are anxious to get going, and if you do as many plots as I do, time is always an issue. But I'd rather wait for perfect conditions and then really get after it.”

WN: Do you frost seed Fusion at the same rate you would if just establishing a new plot?

Say: “I decide on a plot-by-plot basis. If I have a plot that's pretty lush already, I just seed at the recommended rate. And by the



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■ Frost seeding Fusion can produce lush, attractive food plots.

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Jason Say photo

way, even plots that look really good in late summer and early fall can benefit from frost seeding, especially with Fusion, as it will not only give your clover a boost but give more life to the chicory, which is typically shorter-lived.

“On a plot where I know I have bare spots or I know the plot was stressed the year before, by drought or other factors, I’ll go at 1-½ times the normal seeding rate. The same goes for when I’m converting an annual plot into a perennial

one. One of my favorite tactics lately is to plant a new plot to one of Whitetail Institute’s annual products for a year or two and then come in that next spring and frost seed Fusion.”

WN: Wait, you’re establishing Fusion plots simply by frost seeding?

Say: “Well, I kind of consider this the new frontier. I’ve been experimenting with it the last few seasons, and right now, I’m at about a 60% success rate. But when it works, it’s absolutely killer.

My typical process is to plant a new plot into something like oats, Beets & Greens or No-Plow for the first two years and then rotate it into a perennial. And since I’ve been having so much success with frost seeding, I just thought, ‘Why not frost seed Fusion in there to get things going?’ and I’ve had many plots where it just worked like a dream. I’d already had the pH levels close to where I needed them, because I’d done my homework on the annual plots.”

WN: How soon after frost seeding will you know how successful you’ve been?

Say: “Typically, by mid-spring, I’ll have an idea of how well the Fusion took in the frost seeding. And assuming you get a good catch, this is a critical time to get a jump on weed control. When the clover is 3 to 4 inches tall, get the sprayer out, and take care of that initial broadleaf or grass growth. And if you’re struggling to identify what kind of weeds you’re dealing with, calling the Whitetail Institute

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■ Frost seeding Fusion is somewhat of a new frontier, but Say has enjoyed about a 60 percent success rate with the practice.

Jason Say photo

makes perfect sense. They have experts on hand who can help you identify the weed and what product to use to combat them, with ArrestMax or Slay herbicides.

“As summer progresses, I typically use mowing to stay ahead of weeds. Lots of guys ask me, ‘When should I mow?’ and my general answer is when the clover is heading out and getting stemmy, or the heads are showing some brown. Two years ago, we had a really rainy sum-

mer, and I mowed some of my plots four times. But I always like to check the forecast and have a reasonable certainty rain is coming soon. Mowing is stressful on clover, and rain is the best remedy. And if the forecast is dry, I don’t even consider it. Last year is a perfect example. We had the worst drought in recent memory, and several of my Fusion plots struggled for much of the summer. Even when we got some rain late in the growing season, I

decided to forgo mowing until the next spring. I wanted that clover to go into winter in the best shape possible.”

WN: What do you say to plotters who argue that weed control isn’t that big a deal?

Say: “This is another one I hear all the time, and guys like to say, ‘Well deer eat weeds, too.’ And obviously the answer to that is, ‘Of course they do.’ But to me, if you’re going to spend the money to buy a high-quality seed like Fusion, don’t you want it to perform as well as possible? It’s not just a matter of serving up the best nutrition — which is certainly important — it’s a matter of economics. If you treat a Fusion plot right, you can get five to six years out of it. If not, you’re plowing it up and starting over. I guess if you only do a plot or two a year, that’s no big deal, but I plant or maintain 30 plots a year, so economics are important. Plus, I know a weed-free Fusion plot simply offers more nutrition to more deer, so weed control makes sense.”



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