



Setting a Drill by Ernest Weaver

Calibrating a drill, the only way to know for sure how much of a particular drill will deliver of a particular seed, must seem like too much work. The evidence is that everyone wants a magic chart that will be right for every seed and every drill. Wee, we want one, too! Here are some tips that can speed up the process of accurately putting the right amount of seed in the ground.

Seeds with commonly known bushel weights, like small grains

Bushel weights being heavy or light compared to the accepted weights are the biggest chance for error in seeding small grains using the charts on the drill. Tim Huffman and Kurvin Zimmerman use a bushel weight scale (pictured on the right) to ascertain the actual bushel weight. Tim Huffman says, "I've tried the old way as described in the 2010 Forage Resource Guide, but this works way better."

You first must obtain a bushel weight scale as pictured here. They are available from \$40 to \$65 on the internet or from the Nasco catalog. Measure the weight of the seed per bushel, say it is wheat, if it is different from the expected (for wheat 60#'s). So let's say the actual bushel weight is 57#. Always divide the expected by the actual. So $60/57=1.05$. So for every 100 pounds you want to seed, set the drill at 105. If your seed is not listed on the drill's chart, pick a seed close to the same expected weight (triticale would use the wheat scale).



Grass Seeds not listed on the drill's seed chart

Tall fescues and festuloliums are exactly the same size and rygrasses and meadow fescues are only slightly different and should go in the large seedbox. If the seed chart lists "crested wheatgrass," and many drills do, use that setting since this grass is exactly the same size and shape as tall fescue. If your chart doesn't list crested wheatgrass you will be using the wheat setting chart. The setting for wheat at 20#'s will be approximately the setting for 10#'s of tall fescue and Festulolium and probably also the starting point for the other larger seeded grass (timothy, bluegrass and orchardgrass are the smaller seeded grasses and probably will be seeded thru the alfalfa box. Remember we said a "starting point" as every drill is different, but try it with a small amount of seed to get started in the right direction. The grass seeds are fluffier and less dense than wheat so this is the reason that the setting is higher for fescue than wheat.

