

For Top Yields, Agway Specialist Advises:

Space Corn Seed Properly

Corn planting time is here. This advice from Nick Feriant Jr., crops specialist, in a recent edition of Agway Cooperator, may help local farmers attain better yields this fall.

Mention the figure 18,000 or 20,000 or 22,000 to any corn grower and he will shake his head rather vigorously to indicate he not only knows what you are talking about, but a lot more to boot.

Check into it a little closer, though, and you'll find he will back off a mite as to whether this is seed to plant or plants at harvest, and if the 15 per cent mortality factor has been worked into the final figures or not. With a lot of prodding, figuring and thinking, and a couple of weeks notice, most will come up with some sort of decent, correct answer.

And yet, in 75 per cent of the counts I make in corn fields,

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the intended and thought of final populations are from 10 to 20 per cent in error, running from 1000 to as much as 5000 plants low or high. Practically all will be on the low side.

This loss in potential population can cost you from 7 to 35 bushels of corn. You see that it pays to end up with the population you planned on.

Yet having the correct population is really not the final answer at all; more important is the area of growth you gave each plant and how accurately you planted each kernel. How your individual plant stands stress is the result of many factors, but an important one is the area available for each root system to develop without competition from a neighboring root system.

There are many reasons for narrow rows, but an important one is to give each plant more elbow room. You see, narrow rows do not have to mean more plants per acre. To illustrate, 22,000 plants in 40 inch rows

will have 84 plants per 50 feet; in 30 inch rows this will be only 63 plants or almost 25 per cent less. This means that each root system will have almost 25 per cent more soil area down the row in which to develop.

But having 22,000 plants in 30 inch rows will give your root system more growing space, only if we have very accurate planting. This is where most of you fall down badly.

To gain this extra space, each seed must fall rather accurately about 6 to 7 inches apart. Except for some of the new specialty type of planters, it's a sheer miracle if anything approaching this accuracy occurs.

With the normal planter you may get you 22,000 seed in the ground, but the result often looks like flies on the ball door—sort of bunched.

Field checking will show a lot of groups of two, a couple of inches apart, and all too many groups of three. If only 15 per cent fall in groups of three, it means over 1000 plants crushed and smashed between two

others. In normal years these ears will be small or nubbins. In stress years they will go blank and these 1000 blanks mean 7 bushels you'll never get! As important, this crowded stalk is usually thin and has a poor root system.

When it goes over in the fall, guess what gets blamed—the variety or the corn planter?

High corn yields come from many management factors. The above is a small, but oh, so important one.

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