

**From Local Ag Teachers:**



# Thoughts in Passing



The article for this week was prepared by James W. Hilton, teacher of agriculture at Penn Manor High School, Millersville.

Well boys, spring is right around the corner and it will soon be time to put all those well-laid plans into operation for top yields for the 1973 corn crop. After all those hours you've spent calculating crop acreages, soil capabilities, plant populations, fertilizer requirements, pesticide uses, seed, variety and equipment needs, don't get caught behind the eight-ball with a poorly adjusted planter.

Tests have shown that planned plant populations and actual field populations can cut that margin of profit severely and at most times may be attributed to planter failures. So let's get that planter out and get ready to plant following these six easy steps:

After you have set your plant population goals and checked the planter for worn or broken parts, locate and read the owners manual which came with your planter. The owners manual tells you how to adjust your planter to obtain the correct population. It is also an excellent guide for determining planter speed for a given planting rate. Do not exceed the maximum planting speed recommended in the manual. If you do, the seed plate will turn too fast for accurate planting and uniform kernel spacing.

Field tests have shown that an



**James Hilton**

increase of two miles per hour over recommended planter speeds may reduce initial plant populations by more than 2,000 plants per acre. Planting speeds may be determined by driving your tractor between two markers spaced 176' apart while observing the time required to cover the distance. The following table may be used to convert the time in seconds to miles per hour.

Time to Drive 176'	Speed
102 seconds	1 mile per hour
60 seconds	2 mph
40 seconds	3 mph
30 seconds	4 mph
24 seconds	5 mph
20 seconds	6 mph
17 seconds	7 mph
15 seconds	8 mph

The second step in achieving your planned population is to match the seed to the seed plate. To obtain the planned plant population you need to have a 100 percent cell fill of the seed plate. In selecting the correct seed plate, check the seed plate recommendation on your bag of seed corn. Even small variations between seed and seed plates can result in serious planting errors.

The third step is to adjust your planter for the desired planting rate using the information found in your owners manual.

The fourth step involves the checking of the adjusted planter over a distance equal to a known portion of an acre. This distance may be calculated or taken from a table similar to the one below which is based on 1-200th of an acre:

Row Spacing	Distance to Drive
20"	130'8"
30"	87'1"
36"	72'7"
38"	68'9"
40"	65'4"
42"	62'3"

From this simple check several things may be observed:

1. Note the number of kernels dropped per row. This figure averaged and multiplied by 200 should equal the planned plant population.

2. Note the spacing of the kernels which should be uniform.

3. Note the condition of the kernels dropped - cracked kernels indicate the wrong size planter plates.

4. Check planting speed and make necessary adjustments.

5. Insure your planned plant population by allowing about a three percent overage in calculating the seed drop.

The fifth step is to make a field check. In doing this, dig out several feet or row and note the kernel spacing and compare this with the spacing found in the

previous check. Make necessary adjustments to achieve the desired population.

The sixth and final step is done after the plants have emerged and is an important step to be used in figuring the next year's plan. During this final step count the number of emerged plants in a given length of row (table 2) and compare it to the planned population and the final harvest population (found when making that all-important yield check.)

O K, let's get out that planter and clean it up, adjust those plates, and shoot for top yields from that acre.

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