

# Chopper adjustment and maintenance important

Timely and adequate maintenance of your farm tractors and equipment is a major factor in determining the efficiency - and profitability - of your farming operation, according to Bill Ottery, Marketing Planning Manager, Crop Harvesting, for International Harvester's Albany, New York Agricultural Equipment

Region. Since many people consider silage a "perishable" crop, it is of utmost importance that your chopper be properly maintained and adjusted to operate throughout the season without breakdown or delay. Review your operator's manual thoroughly and follow the recommendations provided. Regardless of your brand

preference, Ottery said, your attention to the following suggestions will help you through this busy "harvest" time:

**HITCH** - The Tongue should be adjusted to attach to the tractor drawbar in as level a plane as possible. Failure to do so could cause several problems:

1. Improper relationship of attaching unit and basic unit.
2. Plugging at the throat area.
3. Poor discharge angle at the spout.
4. Noisy and short life PTO operation.

**PTO** - The PTO should be adjusted to operate in as straight a line as possible. Keep all shields in place - they are for your protection. Check your operator's manual for proper hookup for 540 or 1000 RPM.

Keep the telescoping halves well lubricated and free of rust and dents. Large choppers transmit a tremendous amount of torque through the PTO shaft and failure to telescope can cause several problems:

1. Pressure at the tractor that can result in PTO failure.
2. PTO cross failures.
3. Slip clutch and/or gear case failure on the chopper.

**WHEELS** - Choose the correct height to keep the sickle and cutting parts out of the dirt while maintaining a satisfactory entrance angle at the throat. Choose the correct wheel spacing to permit proper trailing and ease of staying "on the row."

**WAGON HITCH** - Choose a position to pull the wagon in a straight line behind the tractor, altered only by a variation for row spacings. The wagon will fill properly even though it may be necessary to position the spout a few degrees right or left.

**SPOUT** - Extension or tilt sections are available from most manufacturers. The discharge must be able to fill the rear of the wagon (or truck) without striking crossmembers or braces; if not, adjustment will be required. Bolts used for assembly must be the "carriage" type with the heads on the inside to prevent turbulence. Blowing problems are usually a result of:

1. Improper adjustment
2. Low RPM's
3. Overfeeding the machine beyond its capacity
4. Buildup of plant "gums" on the blowing parts.

**CONTROLS** - Position the controls so they will be readily accessible. Adjust them to prevent interference on turns or through gullies. Electric and/or hydraulic remote controls provide unquestionable convenience and comfort, especially for cab equipped tractors.

**CUT LENGTH** - Most choppers provide for a variety of cut lengths. You must choose the one that will best meet your requirements. When making this choice, consider the following:

Silage cut too short requires additional hor-

sepower hours and is not necessarily better feed. Translated, this means more fuel and more time to produce silage of questionable quality.

Silage cut too long will require more storage space, is usually less palatable, and may cause problems in your feeding equipment.

You may already have made up your mind as to the proper cut length for your operation. If not, we suggest trying the following:

- Haylage - 3/16" or 1/4"
- Silage - 5/16" or 3/8"

**SCREEN SIZE** - Haylage and Silage - A small screen will not provide a short cut. A small screen will improve uniformity and reduce the number of "longs" in the sample. Each line of holes in a screen in reality adds another shear bar, which in turn requires more horsepower. You must determine how much additional fuel and time you are willing to spend for the amount of uniformity you desire.

If you haven't already made up your mind... try the largest screen available. You'll be pleasantly surprised at the results.

**Mature, Dry Crops and Ear Corn** - A small screen should be used for dry crops and for ear corn. Much less horsepower is required at the shear bar; therefore, more power will be available at the screen to better crack the kernels and reduce the number of "longs."

**MAINTENANCE** - Inspect all belts, chains, gears and sprockets for signs of excessive or unusual wear. Replacement and/or proper adjustment before that busy harvest season will pay off in better silage and fewer costly delays. To carry replacement belts, chain and connecting links with you can be the best and least expensive "insurance" you can have.

Last, but not least, don't forget some extra shear bolts. Use the recommended size and type (hardness) - a heavier bolt may result in damage to the machine. Check and adjust the slip

clutch; it is also there to protect the machine. It should be adjusted to protect the chopper - not to allow you to use all available horsepower. Follow the instructions in the operator's manual covering "glazing" and adjustment.

Lubricate the entire machine regularly as indicated in your operator's manual.

**OPERATION** - Let's assume that we have the machine properly set up, adjusted and lubricated and we are ready for field operation. Up to this point we have said very little about the tractor to be used. Your tractor-chopper combination will fall into one of three categories:

**Horsepower and chopper capacity evenly matched** - This combination should provide efficient and trouble-free service for an economical operation.

**Low horsepower with large chopper** - This combination will obviously result in poor chopper capacity and performance but will seldom be the cause of machine failure.

**High horsepower with medium or small chopper** - This combination usually spells TROUBLE. Too many operators attempt to operate at tractor capacity rather than machine capacity. These practices will include faster ground speeds, heavier windrows, tighter slip clutches and heavier shear bolts. Capacity will be above expectations, but unfortunately downtime and expensive repair will be excessive.

To summarize, Ottery said that speedy and efficient performance of your equipment during the harvest season starts before you go to the field. Plan well ahead of the season of use of inspect and adjust so as to allow time to obtain any repair parts that may be required. A rainy day spent in the machine shed can pay dividends of many sunny days in the field.

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