

How to prepare corn planters for accurate seed drop

LANCASTER — Of the many field operations involved with raising a crop, planting is the most important because you live with the results all season long.

With the planting season rapidly approaching, it is timely to get the machines ready to go before they GO.

It takes only a few minutes to be sure. Good crop yield is directly related to planter function and it deserves some inspection time before heading into the field. There is only one opportunity to do the job right.

Planters of modern design include basic features that provide for accuracy, speed and simplicity. Every manufacturer has tried to keep his planter simple in design - be it a plate-type or plateless or air-operated machine.

"All planters are designed to accurately put seed in the ground," says David Knopp, Crop Production Manager for International Harvester's Northeast Region.

"The operator needs a basic understanding of his planter function; and then, be sure to give proper care to the few critical areas of his machine. This is the only way to assure getting the accurate performance that was designed into it," Knopp said.

In the planting of any crop there are three key problem areas to consider, according to Knopp: tire sizes and pressure, seed openers, and seed selection mechanism.

He discussed them one at a time starting with the tires.

Plant population will vary depending upon your tire size, tire pressure and soil conditions that affect the

tires' rotation; that is, slippage, soft ground and etc.

Tire sizes and sprocket settings must be coordinated when calculating desired plant populations.

In fact, the tires take such a critical part in determining population that some manufacturers are putting tires on planters at the factory level to assure proper coordination with charts on the machines.

A simple solution to calibrating your planter tires to the population charts requires a piece of rope about three feet long.

With your planter loaded with seed and fertilizer and ready-to-go to the field, wrap the piece of rope laterally around a planter tire through the wheel rim opening so that it makes a ground mark with each forward revolution, Knopp said.

If your chart guide is based on a tire size that travels 86 inches with each revolution, and you find the distance between the rope marks is 90 inches for example, your field will be under populated with seed.

To determine what your population is going to be simply divide the desired 86 inches of travel by the 90

inches of travel that your tire is making and multiply this by the desired population.

In this example, 26,000, the equation reads $86 \times 26,000 \div 90 = 24,844$ actual plants per acre. The key factor is 86 over 90 or .955% of your desired population.

This is approximately five percent less than desired or some 1200 plants.

By referring to your plant population chart you will find a sprocket setting that is close to five percent higher (27,000 to 27,500) and using this new setting you will then know that you are planting at five percent less than this figure or close to 26,000 plants per acre that you desire.

If you then find that your population rate is still off; then there is a more complicated problem elsewhere in the system. But first, make the tire revolution

measurement with your planter fully loaded as this will more than likely establish the correct setting for you.

One such calibration of the planter drive wheels to the charts should suffice for the planting of that entire crop.

The seed openers, whether runners or double disk, should be checked carefully for wear, obstructions, and proper function.

This is a very critical area which determines the proper placement of the seed in the row, and any stoppage or malfunction has a direct effect upon the desired plant population. Checking and corrections should be made.

The third critical area of all planters is the seed mechanism, according to Knopp. It should be checked for worn and broken parts and determined that all parts are functioning properly.

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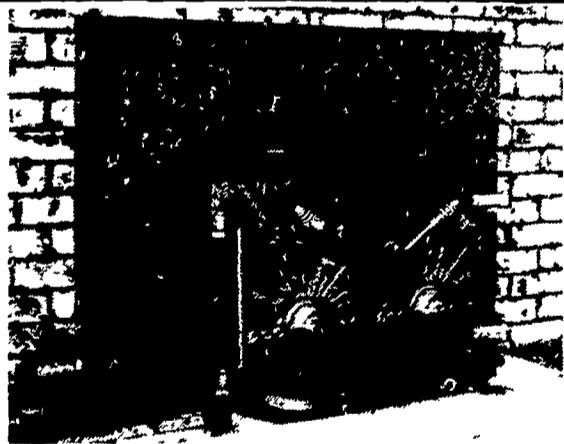
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