

Walk corn fields now to confirm hybrid choices

LITITZ — It isn't always comfortable walking fields of full-grown corn, but growers who haven't done it may be in for some surprises at harvest time, especially this year. You can't assess corn yield potential from the road because the "outside row" effect will fool you every time.

An annual field-by-field checkup can help you sharpen your management in many ways. Be on the lookout for such basic managerial inputs as weed and insect control.

Herbicide application timing or technique may require adjustment in the future. Evidence of insect damage needs to be assessed. Corn borer and other insect activity should be identified and analyzed in anticipation of improved pest control.

You may find that because of the varying and somewhat abnormal growing conditions, these aspects of your cropping program will show different results than you're used to, says DeKalb Agronomist Wayne Fowler. Even so, there is one more important aspect of your program you'll want to give particular attention — the corn hybrids, themselves.

Soil fertility and tillage programs are often reflected in crop appearance. Recognition of a problem, plus some detective work to identify the culprit, may lead to adjustment of fertilizer rates or analysis.

Soil compaction problems,

once identified, dictate a change in time and extent of tillage.

A pre-harvest review is almost essential to the wise choice of hybrids for the next season. One word of warning, however; don't base all hybrid decisions on one field or the experience of only one year. Get overall assessments from several fields in your area. Visit demonstration plots growing on soils and under conditions similar to yours, he advises.

Well-formed ears that have scattered or limited kernel-set indicate that heat caused the hybrid to miss its pollination "nick." Silks were delayed to the point that little or no pollen was available when they became receptive. Or, possibly, pollen was killed by heat or low humidity before it did its job.

Scattered barren plants should not be of concern, but if more than about 10 percent of the plants have no ears, you are seeing the result of more stress than the hybrid could handle. This could be due to drought, heat, inadequate fertility, disease or insect infestation, higher populations than appropriate for the management, or several other things.

Hybrid maturity, date of planting, and hybrid stress tolerance all enter into the degree of barrenness that may be observed.

In your pre-harvest field examination, be very alert to stalk quality. Plants that

have been through stress are prone to soft, weak stalks. You can detect these by pushing the stalk to see if it gives away below the ear. Some hybrids and some

fields may be affected by this more than others. You may want to arrange your harvest schedule so as to get those most likely to go down first.

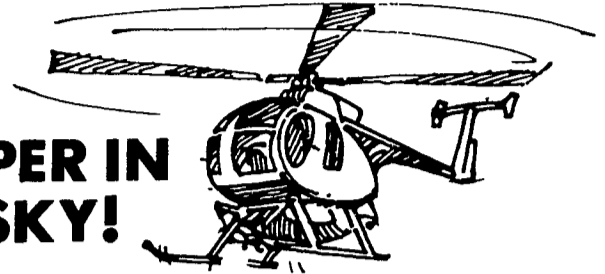
With different reactions from different hybrids this year, it may be a wise management decision to order early the hybrids you feel are doing the best job.

You may want to send for a DeKalb publication, "Diagnosing Corn Problems in the Field," from DeKalb AgResearch, Inc., Sycamore Road, DeKalb, IL 60115.



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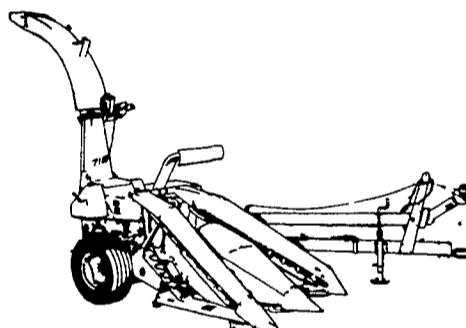
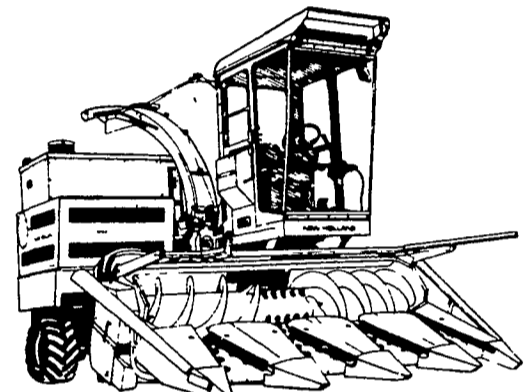
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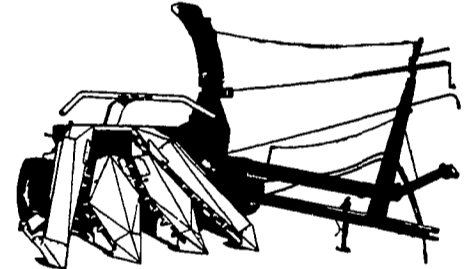
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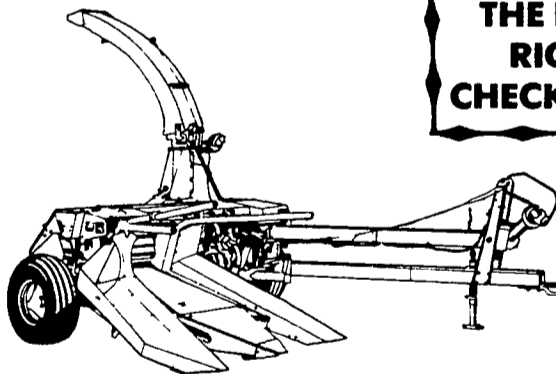


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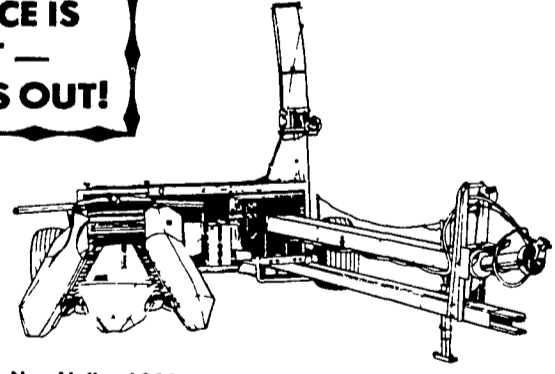


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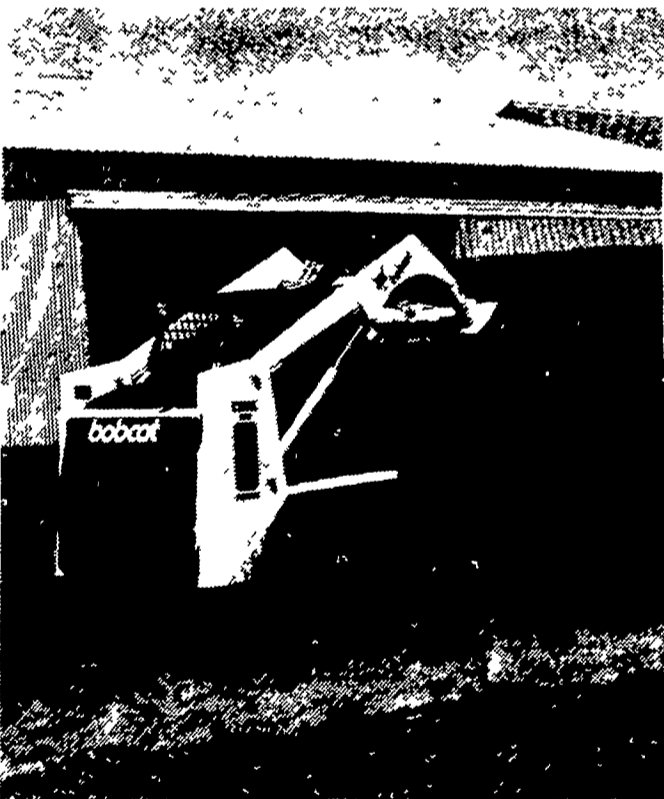
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