

Try an integrated approach to quackgrass control

SHIPPENSBURG — A tenacious, cool season, widely distributed weed, quackgrass is largely considered the number

one weed problem in major corn-growing states. Research has shown that this pesky perennial can easily reduce corn yields by 25

percent or more, as well as seriously affecting yields in other row crops. Because it propagates both by seed and from

underground rhizomes, quackgrass is difficult to control and almost impossible to eradicate. The weed's dual reproductive capabilities have earned it the title "tiger of the cornfield".

Infestations, while particularly heavy in Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, New York, and Ohio, are found everywhere except several states in the deep south and southeast.

Quackgrass leaves are about one-quarter-inch wide and somewhat hairy on the upper surface, with a pair of claw-like "hooks" clasping the stem. Rhizomes are white when young, later turning straw-colored, and have very sharp points which can easily spread through soil.

More Than Tillage
The rhizomes serve as reserve food storage, enabling the weed to establish new growth even when entirely separated from the parent plant. Massive development of rhizomes and roots - up to six tons per acre - makes the plant difficult to control by cultivation alone, although repeated tillage will significantly reduce stand and vigor.

In addition, rhizomes reportedly secrete a toxic substance which enhances the competitive ability of the plant and inhibits the germination of seeds.

In fact, quackgrass is so competitive that university field plots with quackgrass infestations yielded only 15 bushels per acre, whereas fields where quackgrass was eliminated reached 80 bushels per acre.

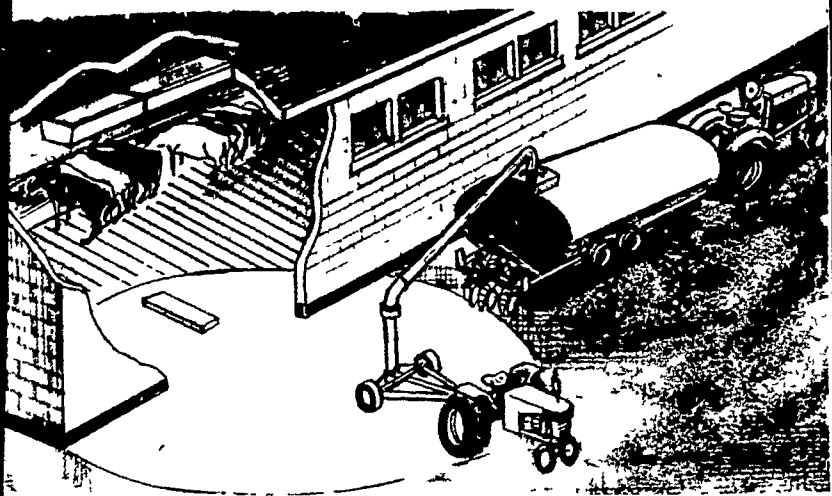
Effective quackgrass control is the result of an integrated approach, utilizing a combination of chemical and non-chemical means. Tillage alone has not been an efficient method because the land must be taken out of production for extended periods of time to allow for frequent and expensive tillage operations.

The traditional - but not always most practical - method of quackgrass control is to grow corn on infested acreage for three years using high rates of atrazine.

Farmers growing continuous corn have achieved satisfactory results using split applications of atrazine: one applied prior to fall or spring plowing, and the other as a pre-emergence treatment in the spring. Higher rates are used the first year, followed by reduced rates in the second and third years.

The major drawback (Turn to Page C42)

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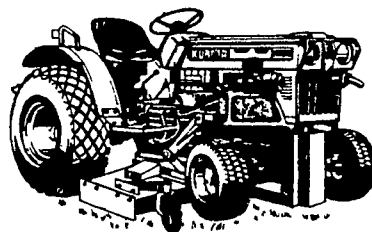
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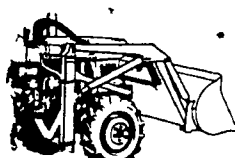
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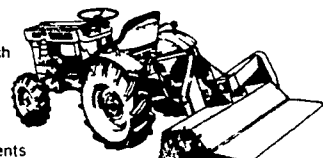
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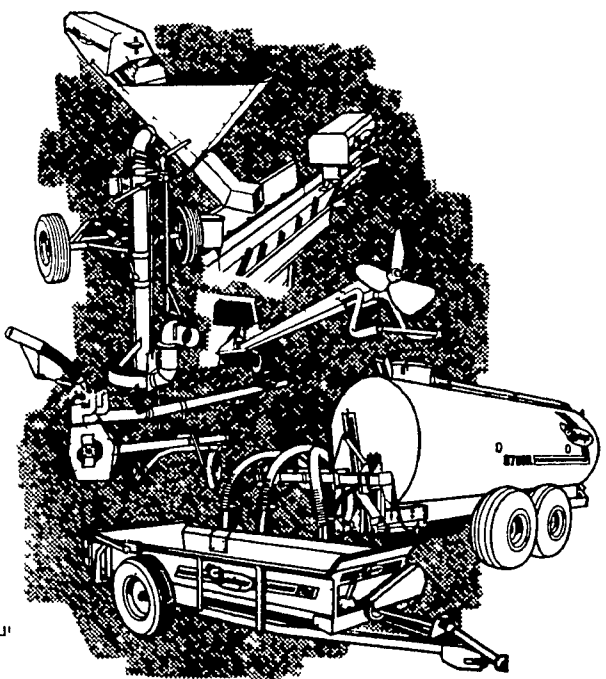
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