

Farm Business News

Good records necessary for machinery decisions

LANCASTER — It's relatively easy to figure about how much your next tractor will cost. But what about after purchase? If that new tractor is either under- or over-sized, it can continue to cost you money. And conversely, if it's the right power unit for the job, it will make money for you.

Machinery management is nothing new. However, with farm equipment becoming larger, more sophisticated and more costly, the stakes are now higher than ever before.

Too often, machinery purchases are based on hunches, tradition, or a rough guess of time available for doing certain jobs.

"But sound machinery decisions often depend on being able to accurately anticipate your future needs," claims Massey-Ferguson Agri-business Economist Dennis Sharpe. "That's why records are essential."

Many farmers spend little time on this "homework", however. The problem may be that record-keeping is time consuming. To make this job manageable, only

keep practical records. The data should be simple to read and refer to, and not cluttered with unnecessary details.

The first priority should be a record of work and no-work days each season for your particular soils and practices.

"It doesn't matter what you're growing, you must keep good records of your planting experience each year and relate them to your potential yield and profits," Sharpe says.

"You need those records — and what they tell you about average number of working days available during the critical time spans in spring and fall — in order to make good machinery management decisions."

The second priority is a history of maintenance and repairs on each major piece of farm equipment. "It's important to know how much you're spending for repairs (parts and labor) on each machine," contends MF's Sharpe. "This kind of information is particularly useful when deciding the best time to trade a machine."

Personnel changes

LANCASTER — Several additions and changes to rosters of personnel have been announced recently by leading companies in the field of agribusiness.

They include:

Majorie Grant, a Penn State graduate in animal production, has joined Curtiss Breeding Industries, Inc. as assistant field operations manager. Along with teaching A.I. schools, she will assist with shows, exhibits, distributor contacts and sales.

Wid P. Crawford has been named president of Pfizer Genetics, Inc., one of the three operating units of the Pfizer Agricultural Division. He will be responsible for all operations of Pfizer's hybrid seed business. A native of Eastland, Tex., Crawford joined Pfizer in 1958.

James F. Spurrier has been named general sales manager for A.O. Smith Harvestore Products, Inc. He will be in charge of all line sales functions and supervise division and area sales staffs throughout North America.

Also look at operating costs besides those for maintenance and repairs. A record of fuel and lubricant costs for tractors and combines, plus ownership costs, can help you nail down total cost per hour of operation. That's important information when making replacement decisions.

WHAT'S NEW

Bull joins Curtiss

ELLBURN, Ill. — Eng-Amer Pellinore - ET (40H2947), a young Holstein bull bred by William and Gary Behm, Adrian, Mich., has joined the battery of Holstein bulls at Curtiss Breeding Industries Inc. He will be sampled nationwide through the Curtiss Blue Chip Program.

Pellinore's dam, a Very Good

daughter of Imperial Knight, has a Cow Index of +2066 pounds of milk, +66 pounds of fat with a repeatability of 50%.

Sired by S-W-D Valiant, a successfully proven A.I. sire with a PDM of +1560 pounds and a PDT of +2.45, Pellinore should sire stature and dairyness as well as good udder support.

Grey leaf spot problems seen increasing in corn

KINSTON, N.C. — The movement toward minimum tillage practices by farmers in the humid bottomlands of the mountainous regions in the East has increased problems with grey leaf spot, a corn disease capable of significantly affecting yield and standability, says Dr. Rodney Edmondson, corn research scientist for Funk Seeds International in Kinston, NC.

"Problems with grey leaf spot are compounded by minimum tillage practices, and therefore incidence of the disease seems to have increased in recent years," Dr. Edmondson says.

"The fungus overwinters in corn plant residue left on the surface, providing a steady source of infection for the next season."

The disease exhibits greyish, elongated lesions on the leaves, up to two inches long, Dr. Edmondson explains. "The symptoms are very distinct and occur most often after flowering," he adds. "Older plants seem to be more susceptible to the disease."

This predisposes the plant to stalk rot, stalk breakage and premature death. Reduced grain

test weight and lodging are responsible for thousands of bushels of lost yield annually.

Dr. Edmondson says fields where grey leaf spot is a problem should be plowed after grain harvest. "That cuts down on the amount of infection that might occur the following year. Corn can be cut for silage, too. Removing leaves and stalks gets the disease off the field."

"The important thing is to do something with plant debris if the disease is a problem," he continues. "Also, crop rotation would help, although that may not fit into a grower's operation or marketing situation."

Of course, plant resistance to the disease is another important management tool. "At Funk, we're screening for hybrid resistance to grey leaf spot," Dr. Edmondson says. "G-4525A shows some tolerance to the disease."

Growers suspecting grey leaf spot infection in their fields should contact their county extension agent or an independent consultant, Dr. Edmondson says, to confirm the disease's presence before making management decisions.

It's time for chopper checkup

NEW HOLLAND — Although the seed may just have gone into the ground, it's not too early to think of a pre-season chopper checkup.

Such a checkup now or in the near future can mean faster silo filling later with reduced fuel consumption, according to Howard Winey, of Sperry New Holland.

No matter what machine you use, the basics are the same. Chopping to the right length of cut, proper lubrication, knife sharpening and shear-bar adjustments are the main points. All are things to take care of ahead of season.

Built-in sharpeners simplify the chores but too many machines are operated with too-wide knife-to-shear-bar clearance that robs power and boosts fuel use. The other fuel waster is a too-fine chop, notes Winey, who is product manager for forage equipment at New Holland.

For haylage, he says, the best choice seems to be between 1/4th

and 3/8th inch theoretical length of cut. This is fine enough to get good consolidation in the silo to prevent spoilage. It is also just about coarse enough to avoid most of the dairy digestive problems associated with no-hay rations. Chopping finer than 1/4-inch can be expected to lower butterfat test and lead to cow health problems unless you also feed some hay, says Winey.

Another pre-season check item is the overload protection on your harvester. Clutches need to be checked to make sure they're free to function properly. Another item is easy to overlook, according to Winey. That's the safety equipment.

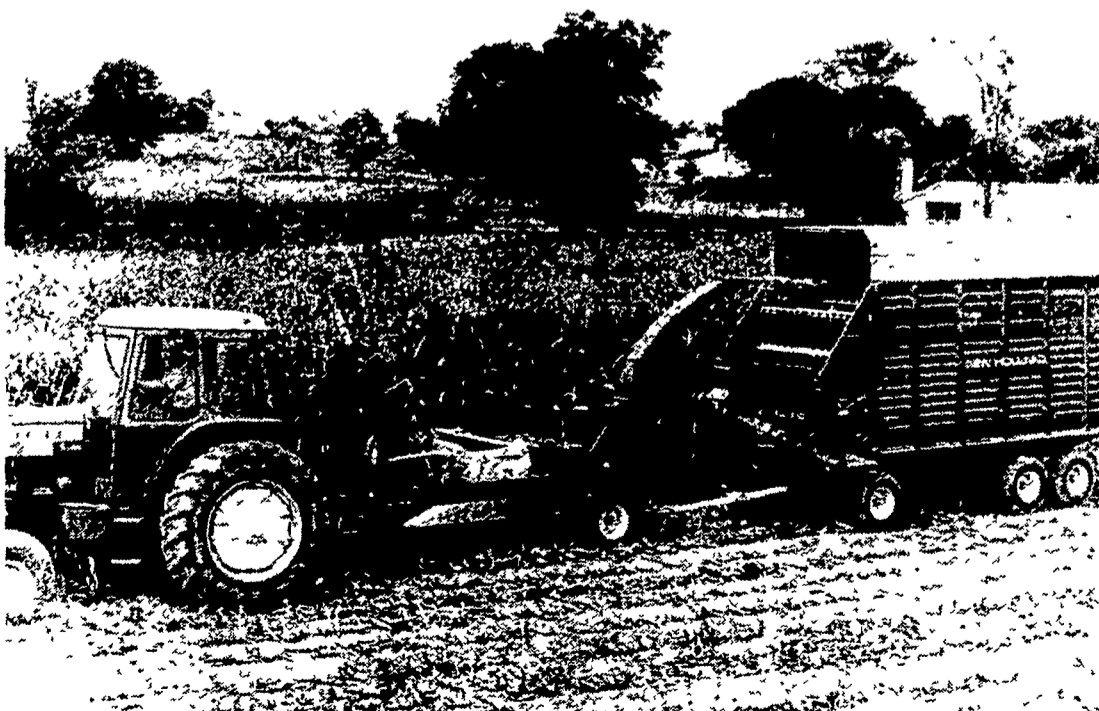
Sometimes there's a temptation to remove shielding. Usually it's not a matter of forgetting to replace the shields when machines are operated without them. Instead, it's more likely to be a matter of hurry on the part of the

tractor driver who is tempted to skip shield replacement to save a few minutes.

That's the reason pre-season service is so important. You go over the machine before you have to hurry out to get chopping.

For corn and sorghum or sudax, the best choice in length of cut may vary, depending on crop maturity, moisture content and whether you're feeding beef or dairy cattle says Winey. Of course you have to chop fine enough to avoid problems with your silo unloading equipment. Usually, a 1/4-inch is near the mark.

If corn or sorghum are being harvested at a not-quite-mature stage for dairy cattle you may not need as short a length of cut as for mature corn intended for beef cattle. A fine chop works for beef. In either case, it's important to chop the crop fine enough to pack well in the silo. Trench and bunker



A pre-season checkup and adjustment of a forage harvester now can mean faster chopping and silo filling later. Also, the checkup can substantially reduce fuel

requirements. Chopping to the right length of cut, proper lubrication, knife sharpening and shear-bar adjustment are the main areas to check in a review of a harvester.

Product combines grinding, weighing

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, IL — A new product available from A.O.

silos may need a slightly finer cut than tower or sealed silos.

You can get good results with any type of silo with good management, Winey emphasizes. But generally, you need a fairly fast removal rate or cold weather to avoid spoilage in a trench silo. That's the reason the trench may seem attractive to large feedlots where silage removal is fairly rapid. That's also part of the reason smaller herd operators tend to choose a tower silo instead. There's less spoilage where less silage surface is exposed to the air between feeding times in a tower silo.

Smith Harvestore Products, Inc., offers the advantages of finely-ground high-moisture grain with precise automated weighing for users of continuous flow, automated feeding systems.

The new product, called the Wa-Matic, is specifically designed for use in smaller dairy and swine production operations.

It combines into one efficient unit two Harvestore system products, the grain weigher and the hammermill.

The new unit may be set to weigh and grind a pre-selected quantity of high-moisture grain. It offers all the advantages of the well-known Harvestore system Wa-Ro-Matic with the capacity of hammermilling, rather than rolling, grain.

