

Dribble fertilization

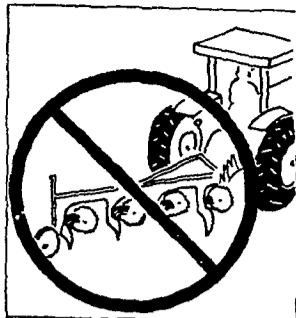
(Continued from Page D22)
 ag engineer for Allied, the most efficient way to dribble fertilizer in reduced tillage would be to attach a polyethylene hose to each chisel shank and pull a spray tank behind the tillage implement. An alternative would be to mount a tank on the chisel itself or mount saddle tanks on the tractor, he says. The farmer can then apply nitrogen and other needed nutrients in one operation, with the same piece of application equipment.

Many custom applicators, aware of the increasing need to improve fertilizer efficiency, are modifying their high-clearance spray equipment for dribble applications, Hakenson reports. This is usually done by spacing centers 10-30 inches apart, attaching a hose to each nozzle and letting it dangle within six inches from the ground.

The hoses apparently permit application on days that ordinarily would be too windy for fertilizer applications. The farmer mixes the fertilizer into the soil whenever he chisels, preferably in the same direction as the dribble band.

There is no hard and fast rule for spacing the fertilizer strips; it really depends on the crop to be grown and what type of spray and/or tillage equipment is on hand.

For solid-seeded crops and those planted in narrow rows, fertilizer strips should be placed 10-20 inches apart, Johnson says. For corn, 20- to 30-inch spacings are recommended. "This way, if you're planting corn in 30-inch rows, the seed will never be more than 10 to 15 inches away from the fertilizer," Johnson explains. "Sure, it will take a little time for the



roots to find the band. But once they do, there will be more fertilizer available."

Because the farmer has no assurance that the band will be in close contact with the seed, Johnson suggests making a starter application of a 10-34-0 ammoniated polyphosphate solution at planting. "Farmers practicing conservation tillage probably ought to be using a

starter fertilizer anyway," he adds. "Unplowed soils tend to be more moist and up to five degrees (F) cooler than plowed soils. These conditions can greatly limit the availability of P₂O₅ to the crop during its early stages of crop development."

Model Program

Dribble applications fit well with the concept of "spoonfeeding" nitrogen — that is, applying nitrogen several times a year in smaller doses for greater N efficiency.

"The agronomic advantages of splitting up your nitrogen-application schedule have been well documented," Johnson says. "What many farmers have failed to realize is that multiple fertilizer applications can usually be made without making additional trips across the field."

To illustrate this point, Johnson outlines the following fertilizer-application schedule for a corn grower practicing reduced tillage who needs to apply 200 pounds N, 70 pounds P₂O₅ and 40 pounds K₂O:

In fall or spring, dribble 70 pounds N, 40 pounds P₂O₅ and 30 pounds K₂O while chiseling. An additional 60 pounds N can be sprayed with the farmer's preplant herbicide. A starter application of 10 pounds N, 30 pounds P₂O₅ and 10 pounds K₂O could be made at planting. Another 60 pounds of N could be dribbled at mid-season when cultivating.

Proper herbicide

LANCASTER — Another basic cornerstone of no-till farming is the use of a proper herbicide. Without it, a no-till farmer must still fall back on some form of tillage of control weeds.

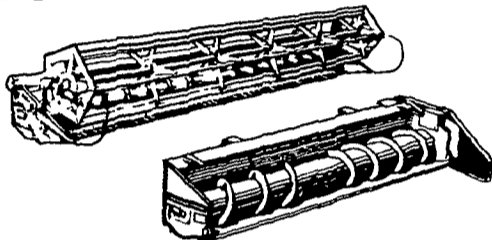
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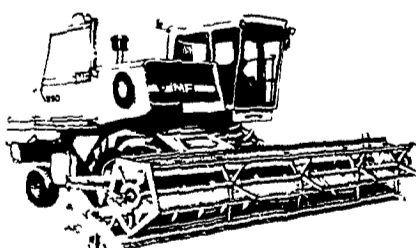
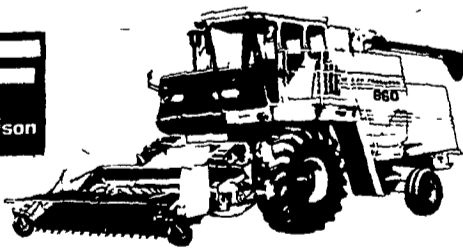
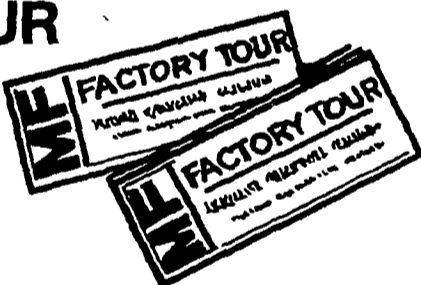
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