

Lancaster's no-till program gives interesting results

LANCASTER — This year was a real challenge to anyone doing custom corn planting in Lancaster County. Looking at the fine corn crop, one tends to forget that a lot of corn went in under wet conditions.

In spite of these wet conditions, 96 farmers used one of the District's planters this year. Three different dealers participated in the District's program: Landis Brothers provided a John Deere 7000; N.G. Hershey provided a White 5100; and A.L. Herr provided a New Idea 904 double frame planter. The District owns the fourth planter which is a John Deere 7000. At the completion of the planting season, the planter is returned to the dealer who reconditions the planter so it can be sold as a good used planter.

Over 1200 acres were planted this season with the District's planters. Why rent a planter? Most farmers have a planter on their farm already, but it is a fact that half of the participants this year used the District's no-till planter for the first time. It gives the farmer a chance to try or experiment with no-till before he invests in a conservation planter.

Some farmers who are already convinced of the merits of no-till still rent the planter because it is to their favor economically. This is especially true with farms that have small acreage. Since it takes more time to prepare a field conventionally, some rented the planter when they figured there was not enough time to plow. Finally, farmers in the Rural Clean Water Project area were given the planter under special conditions to help promote the practice in that area.

Gerald Heistand, the District's Conservation Tillage Specialist, says that problems for those using the practice for the first time usually fall into one of three categories: that of planting, spraying or scouting.

The conventional planter works from year to year with minor adjustments not so under no-till conditions. When a no-till planter is brought to a new farm, the farmer's idea that the planter worked fine at the previous place so no further adjustments are necessary, underlines that this is still a common misconception. All planters used in the District's program did the job when properly adjusted.

The most challenging type of cover to work with, is tall grasses. Following the established rule of running the no-till coulters slightly above or below the double disk opener will cause problems under these conditions. Sinking the coulters deeper usually improved the situation. If the coulters do not give a clean cut, the grass is pushed into the slot and there is virtually no soil to seed contact.

Sometimes seeds will bounce right out of the slot, which can then be seen laying on top of the grass. Heistand claims there were several plots planted this season with lower populations due to planting in tall grass. The rule of

thumb is to burn down the rye when it reaches a height of 18-24".

A second problem is poor kills on hay fields. Spraying before the hay gets a chance to regrow a bit loses some of the herbicide's effectiveness. Using Paraquat on standing hay gives the same results as cutting it off — it will regrow to give a second crop. To effectively control "weeds" when planting no-till corn into a hay field a combination of the following herbicides is necessary: Atrazine, Bladex, Banvel, 2, 4-D and a surfactant (Roundup is needed for control of orchardgrass). Effective control of hay regrowth is necessary for getting a good corn crop.

The third most common problem this year was insect damage after the corn had germinated. Farmers who used an insecticide when spraying their herbicides did not report any problems to the District office. In some of the fields that had armyworm attacks, a correlation was seen between the density of the cover and the severity of the attack.

In one field, black cutworms

destroyed half of the corn population where insecticides were no used; which underlines the importance of regular scouting by any farmer using no-till. Stalk bores were responsible for a slight decrease in population but it was not considered serious.

The most important short term factor of interest to the farmer is the soil he lost due to erosion this year. The importance to others is that no-till farming will help clean up streams. The fertilizer element phosphorus attaches itself to soil particles, so keeping the soil on the land will help control pollution due to phosphorous. This is just one step to helping clean up the Chesapeake Bay.

Anyone interested in seeing a

tillage comparison plot should contact Heistand at the Lancaster County Conservation District at 299-5361. A formal tour is being planned for the eastern Lancaster County area on Friday, Aug. 24, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, starting from the Summit Valley School just south of New Holland.

Anyone planning to go on the tour should contact the District Office at (717) 299-5361 or the Alternative School at (215) 445-5041 (ask for Robert Anderson or Donald Robinson), so transportation can be provided. This tour is being planned by the Lancaster County Conservation District in cooperation with the Agricultural Department of the Eastern Lancaster County School District.

Lanc. Farm Credit holds meetings

LANCASTER — The Lancaster Farm Credit Associations held two sectional Agri-Business meetings to inform the area Agri-Business persons of programs offered by Lancaster Farm Credit. The New Holland and Quarryville Branch Offices held a joint meeting at the Bird-in-Hand Restaurant, Bird-in-Hand, on Aug. 14, and the Lancaster Branch Office held a meeting at the Kreider's Restaurant, Manheim, on Aug. 16.

The branch personnel presented valuable information concerning the following topics: General Credit Outlook, Future Financial Services and Farm Programs. After the branch personnel presentations, the Lancaster Farm Credit Associations new General Manager, James S. Owens, served as moderator for a question and answer period relating Farm Credit policies and procedures. Both meetings were well attended.



A farmer participating in Lancaster County's no-till program pulls a John Deere 7000 conservation planter through his fields.

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SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS:

AUGUST 30, 1984	1 PM	BLUE BALL FIRE HALL - BLUE BALL, PA
AUGUST 30, 1984	7 PM	LEOLA FAMILY RESTAURANT - LEOLA, PA
SEPT. 4, 1984	7 PM	BONANZA RESTAURANT - HANOVER, PA
SEPT. 6, 1984	NOON	GRILL & GALLERY REST. - SHIPPENSBURG, PA
SEPT. 6, 1984	7 PM	RISSERS RESTAURANT - MYERSTOWN, PA

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION CALL

Blue Ball Meeting	RAY BRECHBILL	(717) 626-5266
Leola Meeting	CURT UMBLE	(717) 898-0884
	EARL UMBLE	(717) 393-3208
Hanover Meeting	JOHN FORRY	(717) 632-4022
Shippensburg Meeting	JAY BEIDEL	(717) 243-7441
Myerstown Meeting	BOB BAKER	(717) 272-8985
	TONY EBERLY	(215) 267-2789

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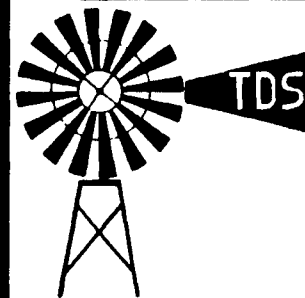
WELDER CLINIC
Wed., Sept. 5 and Thurs., Sept. 6
Evenings 6-8 PM

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