

The Dairy Business

By
Newton Bair

THE FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA

One of the real regrets that I have come to feel is that there was no organization like the FFA in the high schools of my youth. That came long after I graduated. I think the girls had something like Future Homemakers Society, but the boys were either out for football or else faded into the woodwork and kept quiet. I was among those who were never heard and seldom seen.

When writers and orators and politicians feel the urge to ask whether there is any future for farming, they explore and expound on the economics of agriculture, or on the world political situation, and they deplore the demise of the family farm. All good and valid subject matter for discussion. But they seldom mention the great drive and motivation that propels so many young boys and girls toward a career in agriculture. Thank God that drive is still alive and strong as ever!

One of the reasons for keeping alive the enthusiasm for farming in young people is the Future Farmers of America. Along with the 4-H program, these organizations do much to foster and stimulate a continued desire to live the good life that is only possible in rural America. FFA is not only a side effect of the vocational agriculture program in the high schools, it is a great source of stimulation to excel in everything that is tackled. The key to its success in stimulating a continuing interest is the way that FFA encourages competition

among the students, and rewards them for their efforts.

Competition is the ultimate key to success of our democratic way of life. It not only makes the game of life and learning more fun, but it also encourages us to go for the rewards that are offered. Stop to think of it; all through life everyone is looking for some kind of reward for their effort. To achieve any reward in a competitive world requires extra effort. Those who prefer to fade back into the walls are not adequately conditioned to compete for and earn the rewards. The first rewards may be small and inconsequential, but they pave the way for the real ones that ultimately build confidence and leadership.

I've just completed a round of awards and achievement banquets that is a yearly event in our county high schools. The thing that is most impressive about these events is the enthusiasm and gusto exhibited by the officers and member of FFA chapters. There is just no denying the great value of the leadership training that is manifest in the conduct of their rituals. It is a natural result of the competitive spirit fostered by their teams in public speaking, parliamentary procedure, and salesmanship. The competition begins within each class and extends finally to county, state and national groups.

And within each agricultural enterprise, and there are many available, every individual has a chance to excel in his or her chosen projects. But it is the group spirit

that is most fascinating and inspiring, because that is what really builds the will to cooperate with their fellows, and support and enhance each one's individual endeavor. No one can achieve his or her best without support and encouragement from friends and fellow students. That is where real leadership begins.

I salute all those dedicated and hard working ag instructors that have devoted their careers to helping young people get a good start in life. If I ever have the urge to address the question of the future of agriculture, I'll know where to begin. I'll just say this:

"Take a look at the Future Farmers of America. There are

nearly fifty of them in each high school in our county. Even those that eventually choose a career other than ag have learned lessons in competitive achievement that fit them to be future leaders. And those who stay in farming will be the agricultural leaders of the future. And the future of farming is largely in their hands."

Starter fertilizers help corn off to good start

Starter fertilizers can help get a corn plant off to a good start, particularly when the farmer is using no-tillage practices.

"This early application of fertilizer supplies nutrients to the corn seedling, thereby establishing a good root system," said Dr. Douglas Beegle, Extension Agronomist at The Pennsylvania State University. "This can result in greater yields, even in fields with existing high soil fertility levels."

Starter fertilizers are particularly effective under no-tillage conditions because soils are cooler and wetter due to the presence of crop residue, which acts as an insulating mulch. Cold, wet soils decrease contact between the plant root and immobile nutrients in the soil. This can be corrected by placing a small amount of fertilizer where it can be readily taken up by the seedling, the Penn State Agronomist pointed out.

Generally, the material used as starter fertilizer should have a high phosphate ratio and be water soluble. For optimum effectiveness, the phosphate should be in combination with ammonium nitrogen.

"Urea-containing materials should not be used in starter fertilizers and diammonium phosphate should be used with caution because both materials

react in the soil to produce free ammonia. This can be harmful to germinating seeds and seedlings", Dr. Beegle emphasized.

The actual analysis of the starter fertilizer is not critical as long as it meets ratios such as 1-2-1, 1-3-1 or 1-4-2. Granulated, blended and fluid fertilizer also can be used effectively as starter fertilizers if used in correct combinations.

"Only a small amount of fertilizer is required and phosphorus is usually the only nutrient that can be applied totally in the starter band. Banded phosphorus is about twice as effective as broadcasted phosphorus in the short term, but the long-term is about the same," he said.

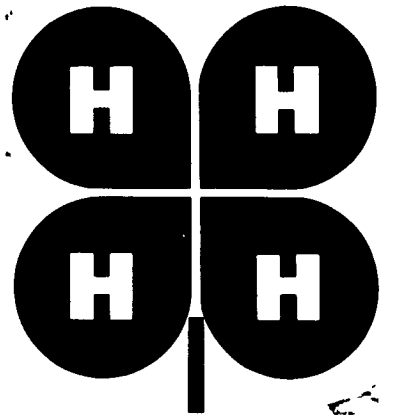
Dr. Beegle cautioned that problems can arise when too much starter fertilizer is used. High rates increase the potential for salt injury. The rule of thumb is not more than 70 pounds of total nitrogen and phosphorus be applied per acre if the nutrients are placed two inches beside and two inches below the seed. If the fertilizer is placed closer, then the total amount should be lowered.

"Farmers often have problems getting fertilizer two inches below the seed when using the no-till system," the Penn State specialist noted. "Many remove the fertilizer coulters from the planters and

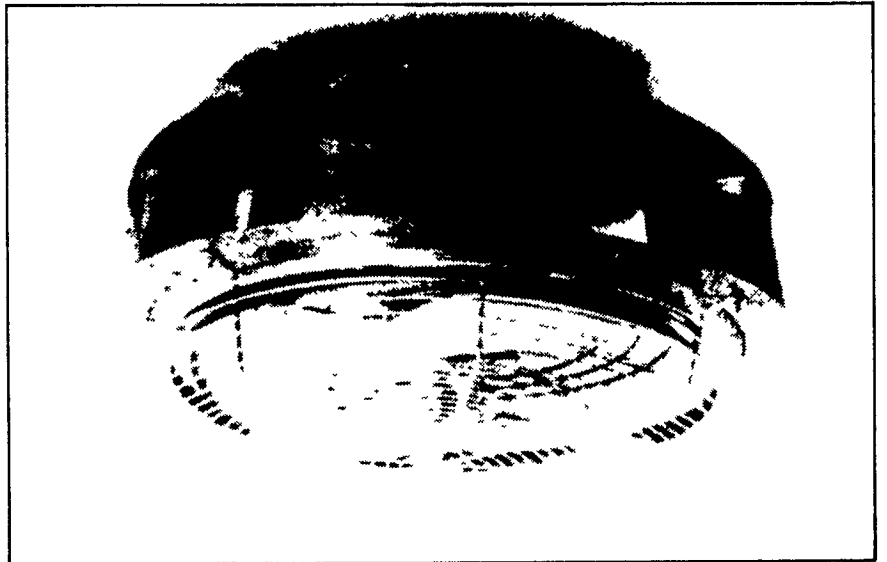
simply dribble the fertilizer over the seed row. This method has drawbacks but is better than eliminating the starter fertilizer."

Other farmers place fertilizer directly with the seed. This placement is called "pop-up" and no more than 50 pounds per acre of total fertilizer should be applied when using this method.

"Research data has indicated that the "pop-up" starter fertilizer placement in no-till corn gives as good or better seedling phosphorus uptake and grain yields as traditional methods. It also helps avoid some of the problems often encountered when trying to get the planter in the ground, since only one opening is required to place the seed and the fertilizer," Dr. Beegle said.



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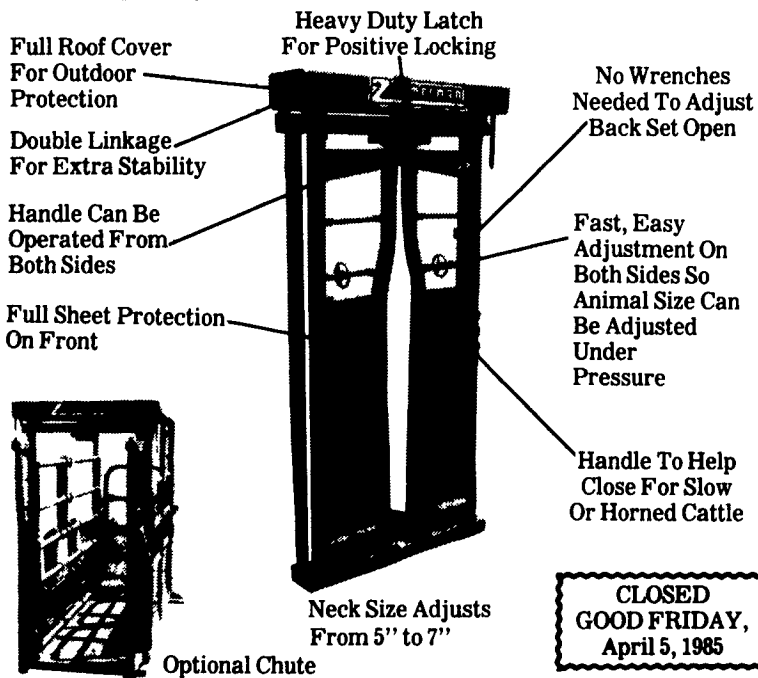
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