

Ridge planting

NEWARK, DE. — The Delaware Cooperative Extension Service has published an eight-page booklet, "Ridge Planting: A Modification of No-Tillage." The publication was written by University of Delaware research associate Cheryl Stevens, professor emeritus Dr. William H. Mitchell, and extension assistant Bob Uniatowski.

No-tillage has been widely adopted by mid-Atlantic farmers—so widely, in fact, that Delaware and Maryland now rank first and second in the U.S. in percent of no-tillage cropland. There are many advantages to this

cropping system. Besides saving time and energy, it helps conserve soil moisture and increases yields, improves soil by adding organic matter, and reduces wind and water erosion.

No-tillage also has its drawbacks, however. It makes soil wetter and colder, sometimes delaying planting under even the best field conditions.

Over a three-year period Mitchell and his colleagues at the University of Delaware Agricultural Experiment Station tested a corn-soybean production system which combines the advantages of no-tillage with those of strip

tillage and ridging. When refined, they say it could involve thousands of additional acres of cropland in conservation tillage as well as increase the productivity of land already no-till farmed.

The booklet tells how tests were conducted and describes the results. Among other things, the scientists concluded that:

* Row placement is important when no-tillage corn follows soybeans.

* On-row planting reduces soil compaction, with or without ridging.

* On-row placement favors uptake of major crop nutrients.

* Ridging helps

compensate for the effects of mulch on soil temperature.

* Planter fertilizer is an important part of the ridging system.

* Cover crops are important in protecting ridges from wind and water erosion during winter months.

This research project was designed to determine how ridge planting, a popular cultural practice in other parts of the country, might be adopted by Delaware farmers. It provided valuable information on soil ridging as a modification of no-tillage, corn response to on-row planting, and increased yields from use of planter fertilizer in conjunction with other production practices.

Based on results to date, the authors say ridging does not appear to have much potential for boosting Delmarva no-till corn yields on well-drained to droughty soils. However, it could be effective on soils presently unsuitable for no-tillage due to excessive moisture.

Free copies of the booklet are available to Delaware residents from county extension offices. Out-of-state residents can get a copy for \$1 by writing: Mail Room, Townsend Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19717-1303. Make checks payable to the University of Delaware.

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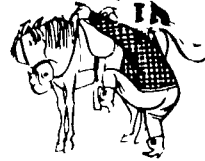
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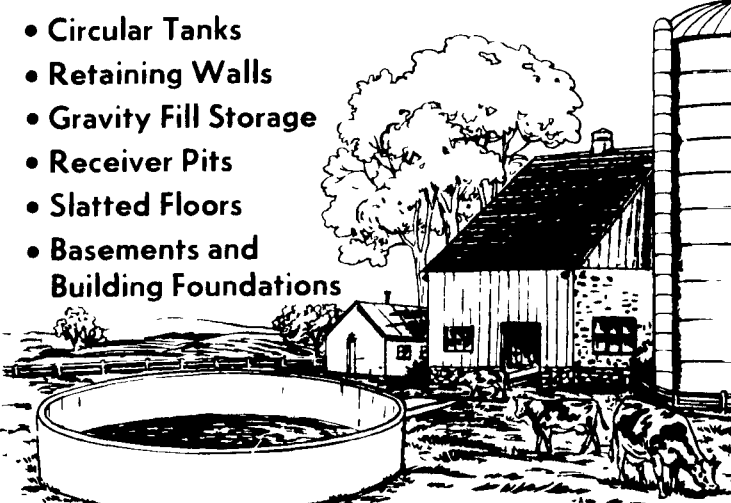
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