

## Paired-row wheat offers less erosion, higher yields

PULLMAN, Wash. — An experimental method of planting could greatly reduce erosion and be cheaper than conventional planting, says a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist.

Preliminary tests show no-till planting of wheat in paired rows controls soil erosion on slopes without sacrificing yields, says soil scientist Robert I. Papendick with USDA's Agricultural Research Service in Pullman, Wash.

Papendick says the Pacific Northwest is the ideal place to test the new planting concept. "With no-till planting, erosion in this area can be held to less than two tons

per acre per year," he says. "This compares with a possible soil loss of 20 tons per acre or more from land planted by conventional tillage. That's a savings of 90 percent.

"In the past, small grains, such as wheat and barley, have not yielded as well when planted on no-till land as when planted with conventional tillage or plowing," says Papendick. "But by combining the paired-row concept with use of a no-till seed drill, our test plots are yielding as much grain as conventionally tilled plots."

"An experimental seed drill used on our paired-row test plots

combines maximum tillage, seeding and fertilizer application in one pass across farmers' fields," says Papendick.

The paired-row concept also gives farmers new options for removing weeds. The 15 inches between rows allows ample space for limited tillage and herbicide treatment, whereas conventional planting allows only 7 inches between rows.

"Paired-row planting also offers possibilities for more efficient fertilizer use," says microbiologist Lloyd F. Elliott with the research agency here.

The concept involves placing the fertilizer between and below the seed row, says Elliott. This arrangement "hides" the fertilizer from weeds, while increasing the amount of nutrients going to the plant.

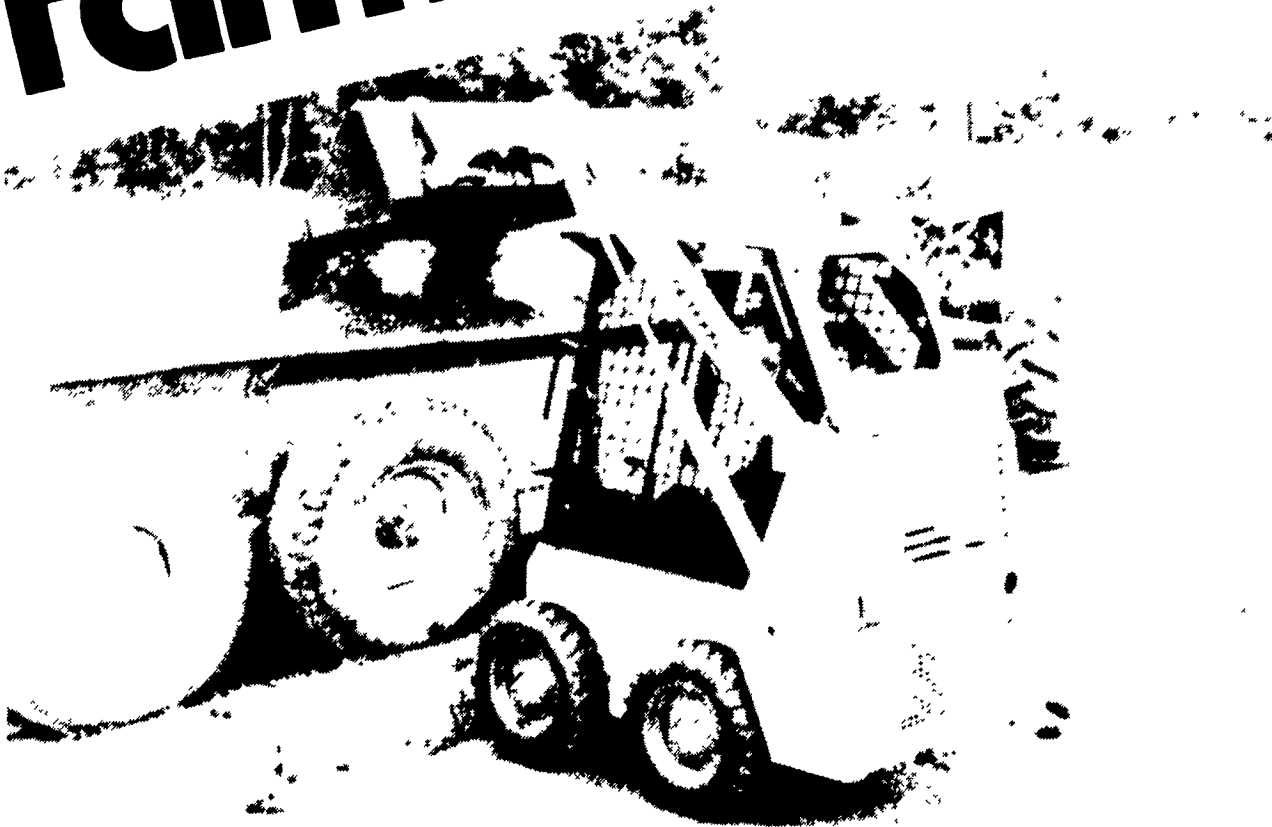
The drill consists of three pairs of 24-inch-diameter, offset double disks mounted on an 8-foot-long tool bar. The paired seed disks are mounted immediately behind and 2-1/2 inches off to the left and right sides of the fertilizer disks.

"At the time of seeding," says Elliott, "one set of double disks bands fertilizer, such as aqua

ammonia, beneath the seed and between the paired rows. The disks simultaneously cover the fertilizer with a layer of soil, which prevents rapid volatilization of the fertilizer."



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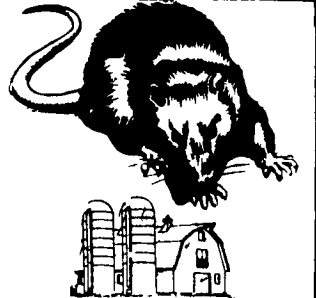
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