

Researchers Study Band Vs. In-Furrow Insecticide Application

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. — When planning for soil insecticide applications this spring, should you set up your planter for in-furrow or band application? Does either method provide better rootworm control or help increase yields?

Several researchers at universities in the Corn Belt have tackled these questions and their conclusions suggest that the performance of both application methods is similar, with banding — specifically "T-banding" — getting the slight numerical edge on the root rating scale.

Researchers also pointed out that banding offers greater product flexibility. All soil insecticides can be applied in a band. But most cannot be applied in-furrow.

Fewer Choices

According to Dr. Tom Turpin, Purdue University research and extension entomologist, in-furrow offers less flexibility in a farmer's choice of insecticide because most products aren't labeled for it.

"This limits your choice to two or three insecticides," he says.

Another problem farmers can encounter with in-furrow application is volatilization.

"When you put the soil insecticide down inside the furrow, in order to protect the roots, the material must move up in the soil as well as down," Turpin explains.

"With most products, the insecticide tends to move downward with the movement of water," he says. "This situation allows rootworms to come in over the top of the insecticide and creates a situation where damage can occur."

Economic Considerations

Dr. Jon Tollefson, director for the Iowa State University corn insect research project, says in-furrow application also may have economic limitations.

"If a grower feels that he has to put his insecticide on in-furrow, he may not be able to use the most economical material because it may not be labeled for in-furrow use," says Tollefson. "Instead of focusing on the method of application, a farmer should look at how a material performs in his area. Then he should look at the cost and how it fits into his farming program, since cost is such an important factor now."

Performance About Equal

Looking strictly at performance, most universities have found more differences among corn rootworm insecticides than they have between band in-furrow application.

In a two-year study at Iowa State University, scientists evaluated three tillage systems, several methods of incorporation.

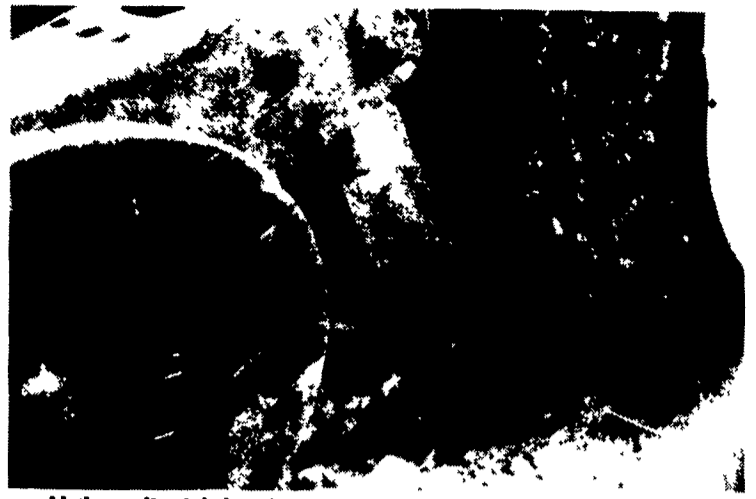
placement of banding units in front of or behind presswheels, and band versus in-furrow application. About 6 percent residue was left under conventional tillage, about 30 percent with a single discing, and about 60 to 65 percent with no-till.

According to Tollefson, they found no significant tillage-insecticide interactions, nor any significant differences in band versus in-furrow placement, although band did show a slight edge over in-furrow.

Best performance for bands was in conventional tillage, as the scientist expected. Performance diminished slightly with 30 percent residue cover, and slightly more with no-till. But changes were so small that it essentially brought banding down to the same level of performance as the in-furrow treatment.

"If you look at the big picture of all of our studies over 15 years, our band treatments beat in-furrow treatments about 60 percent of the time, and the difference is about one-half point on a root rating scale of one to six," notes Tollefson.

He adds that in the 1988 studies, the difference was only one-



University trials show that T-banding is as effective or more effective than in-furrow applications of insecticide. T-banding also gives the grower more insecticide options from which to choose.

twentieth of a point. "Neither one-half nor one-twentieth of a point equals a difference that will show up in a yield, which is what interests a farmer.

"But, if we had to pick one method of application, our overall choice would be the T-band because it's beat the in-furrow 60 percent of the time," Tollefson says. "Even though it was only by a minimal margin, it still came out on top."

Dr. John Wedberg, University of Wisconsin extension entomologist, says that studies done in his state show banding and in-furrow applications to be almost identical.

"In our research trials using a John Deere 7000 planter, we have not been able to find an advantage to either method of performance," he says.

He adds that because many of the growers in the Midwest use the

(Turn to Page D17)



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