

Corn Growers Look At Good Things In Small Packages

KALAMAZOO, Mich. — Bigger might be better in basketball and body building, but when it comes to selecting hybrid seed corn, kernel size has little, if any, effect on performance.

Provided corn growers maintain and adjust planters accordingly, research trials have consistently indicated there is no significant difference in performance between small-sized seed corn and larger-sized seed of an identical hybrid. While all corn plants produce some seed that fit any one of eight different size and shape categories, unusual growing conditions last season presented the U.S. seed industry with higher-than-normal supplies of small corn seed this season. Because small seed often is priced 5 to 10 percent below its average-sized counterparts, this presents growers with an economic advantage for the upcoming season.

"Seed corn size is controlled initially by genetics, but subsequently by environmental condi-

tions," said William Reiss, Ph.D., technical services agronomist, Asgrow Seed Company. "The combination of heavy corn borer infestations and high incidence of stalk and leaf diseases last season stressed corn plants during 1990. The result is a larger-than-normal amount of small-sized corn seed available industry wide this season."

Reiss said, "A corn grower's primary concern in buying seed corn should be superior genetics and high physiological quality. After that, it's important to keep seedlot size uniform, and have the planter properly maintained and adjusted to handle the specific kernel size being planted."

In an effort to ensure top results with Asgrow hybrids, the company conducted plantability stu-

dies in cooperation with Case IH and John Deere. Results of these tests indicate that modern corn planters have the capability to plant any kernel size with the accuracy that the farmer expects.

In a related study with John Deere 7000 series planters, the effect of planter condition and speed demonstrated the necessity to keep corn planters in top work-

ing condition. As long as normal planter maintenance is conducted and speed monitored, kernel size will have little effect on stand density, regardless of the planter used. Tests have shown seed from any of Asgrow's eight kernel size categories with similar germination levels will produce similar grain yields when grown under the same environmental conditions.

Plant 3 Maturities, Spread Risk

DEKALB, Ill. — Farmers who plant corn hybrids of differing maturity have a greater chance of a profitable harvest.

DEKALB Plant Genetics regional agronomist Jim Schwartz said planting three maturities makes good agronomic sense and helps corn growers spread production risks.

"If you spread out your hybrid maturities, you spread risks from such factors as insects, diseases,

and different weather patterns over the course of a year," he said.

He advises growers to plant the best available hybrid in each maturity group. They should select high-yielding, strong-standing hybrids that will be as dry as practical at harvest.

Schwartz advises growers to plant early, medium, and full-season hybrids. A 25-50-25 ratio of these maturities can help growers maximize yields and reduce

risks.

"Planting 50 to 60 percent of your corn acreage in the mid-season range helps reduce the risk from frost and maximizes the total amount of heat units," he said. "Plant another 20-25 percent in the full-season range to get total utilization of sunlight and heat units."

Schwartz suggests planting another 20-25 percent in the short-season range. Growers who sell grain at harvest may want to plant more of this maturity because of moisture discounts.

"By planting a mixture of maturities, you spread and level out the harvest and grain handling load, too," said Schwartz. "You spread use of harvesting equipment over a longer period of time and over more total acres."

He said that costly field losses can be better controlled because more corn can be harvested at its optimum stage.

"Maturity management plus early planting will help growers spread risk and stabilize corn profits over the years," Schwartz said.

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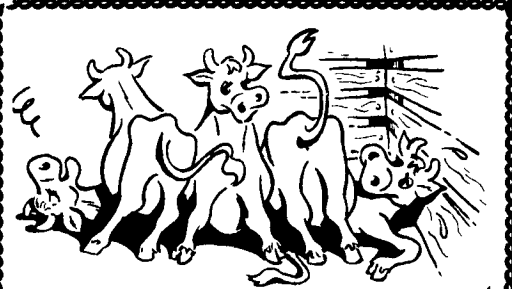
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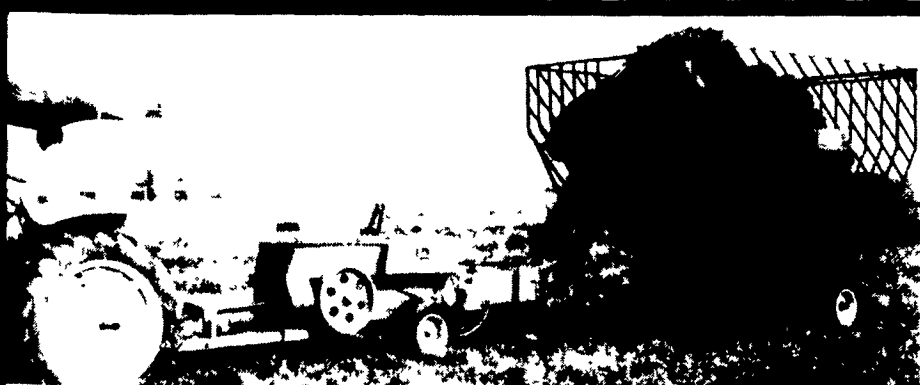
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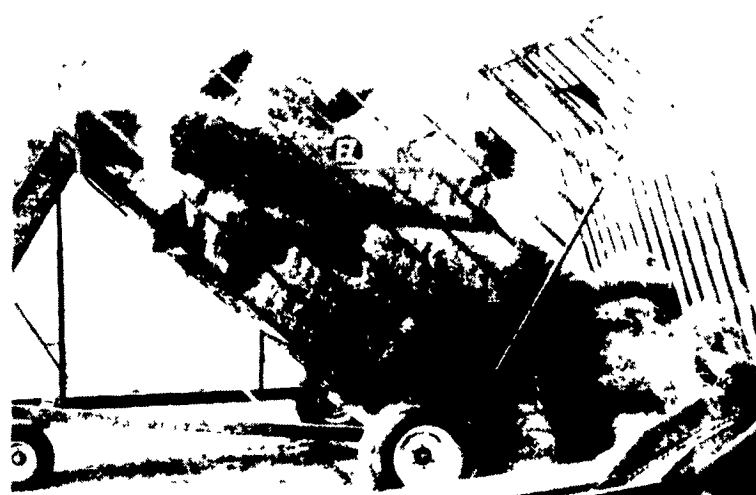
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