

Seed Companies Provide Price Breaks

PRESCOTT, Wis. — There's a quick and easy way for farmers to save from \$3 to \$4 per acre in seed corn costs this spring, but many may choose to pass up the opportunity.

"A lot of farmers believe that small and/or round-shaped seed combinations don't have the yield potential of large and/or flat seed," said University of Wisconsin agronomist Paul Carter. "Several studies have found, however, few significant differences in either emergence or grain yield."

Farmers willing to disregard those biases can achieve significant per-acre savings in seed cost, said Jim Vannet, product information services director for Jacques Seed Company. "With less demand for the smaller seeds, many seed companies offer price reductions as an incentive for farmers to purchase the seed. In addition to the lower cost, smaller seeds are frequently sold in 90,000 kernel-count bags instead of the traditional 80,000 kernel-count bags, so one bag of seed can plant more acres."

Producer Buster Manning of Pantego, North Carolina, grows 1,000 acres of corn each year and plants only small plateless seed. Manning figures he saves over \$3 per acre on his seed corn costs with no reduction in field performance.

The keys to planting smaller seed sizes, he said, are making a few adjustments in the planter and driving at slower speeds.

"It's not complicated at all," said Manning. "You just go by the owner's manual for your initial setup and then make small adjustments, if necessary. The price break on the seed was what got us to try it, but now we'd plant it even if it cost the same as medium rounds because small seed fits our operation."

Steve Schultz, Whittemore, Iowa, plants with an air planter and said he only had problems once planting smaller seed.

"It was the year after one of the drouth years when the small seed was really small," he said, "and I blew out some seed. But I don't know how much of that was the seed's fault and how much of it was the planter's. That's the year I learned how important planter preparation and maintenance was."

"Our research indicates only a very slight germination advantage for flat over round seed sizes," said Vannet. "In our research plots, no significant differences in emergence, early growth or yield performance were found between small and large kernels, flats or rounds. However, the research did show significant differences in yield performance between plant-

ing dates, with highest yield levels being obtained by earliest planting dates in most years.

"Our hybrid corn seed lots, regardless of size, all have to meet the same quality assurance standards and specifications."

Agronomist Carter has also conducted studies to determine any connection between tillage systems, seed size, and hybrid performance.

He planted samples of two widely grown corn hybrids in randomized, replicated plots at two locations. Half the plots were fall moldboard-plowed and disked in the spring. The other half were no-till. The seeds were divided into four groups based on size and shape: small rounds, small flats, large rounds and large flats. The test was conducted over two years and hybrids were evaluated on the basis of emergence, early growth, harvest moisture and yield.

The no-till system tended to result in lower-percent emergence, delayed early growth, higher harvest moisture and somewhat lower yields. But there were no significant differences in any of those measurements related to seed size.

"We recommend that corn producers focus on genetic performance potential and seed price and not a specific seed size or shape combination when selecting

hybrids," Carter said.

Today's hybrid corn technology has proven that both small and large kernels are equal in germination rates and plantability, said Vannet. "What is critical, however, for good plantability is proper plate selection for plate-type planters and proper disk selection, air pressure or vacuum, and brush settings for plateless planters.

"Before dropping the planter in the ground this spring, take time to manage," said Vannet. Be sure to:

- Select hybrids best-suited to your farm and management practices.

- Get the best value by choosing the most economical kernel size.

- When planting smaller seed, be sure that plates, bottom and mechanisms are in good repair.

- Plant a bit shallower than normal. This is key to even emergence and high stand estab-

lishment, especially under cooler and wetter planting conditions. If small seed is planted too deep, the endosperm reserves will be depleted prior to the seedling breaking the soil surface.

- Take time to inspect your planter for worn or broken parts, select proper sprocket settings and have good plates of the recommended number.

- Test-plant to determine the proper seed drop.

- At planting time, use graphite in the seed box, drive at recommended speeds, and change plates as required.

To receive a free booklet describing smaller seed size management techniques, write or call Jacques Seed Company, 720 St. Croix Street, Prescott, WI 54021, (800) 321-2867. Ask for the pamphlet entitled "The Case For Planting Smaller Seed."

Ketchen Receives President's Award

CORNELL, N.Y. — Outstanding contributions to the beef cattle industry in New York were prime reasons for Debbie Ketchen's selection for the award by New York Beef Cattlemen's Association (NYBCA) President Fred Zeiner of Morris.

Ketchen has managed the Cornell Beef Cattle Teaching and Research Center in Dryden since 1980, being responsible for the care and feeding of all beef cattle at the T&R Center. Included in a typical year are more than 100 bulls in the New York Bull Test, 100 beef cows, 20 to 30 replacement heifers, and 4 to 5 herd bulls, as well as more than 300 growing and finishing steers and heifers.

She has been largely responsible for the development of a high performance beef herd at Cornell with weaning weight averages nearing 600 pounds. Research

results from the T&R Center are widely respected and used across the United States.

The bull test becomes her first priority from the time they arrive until they leave after the sale. In addition to feeding and care during the test and collection of the data, she oversees the preparation of the bulls for the sale.

She spends hours communicating with consignors and potential buyers, as well as hosting visitors during the test.

She was appointed coordinator of the bull test by Cornell in 1991.

President Zeiner noted that Ketchen is one of the most knowledgeable persons in the state on the care and management of cattle. Her husband, David Hunsberger, and their children were present at the NYBCA Banquet at the Corning Hilton Inn for the presentation of the 1991 President's Award.



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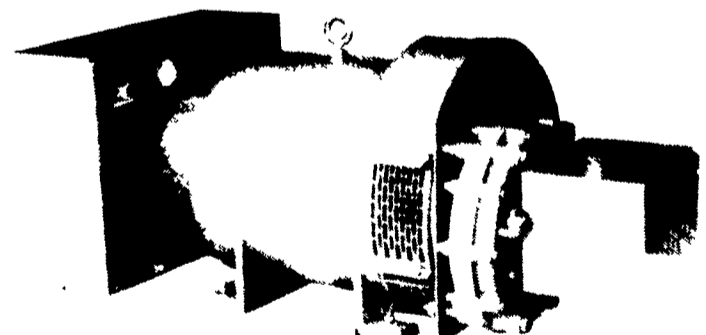
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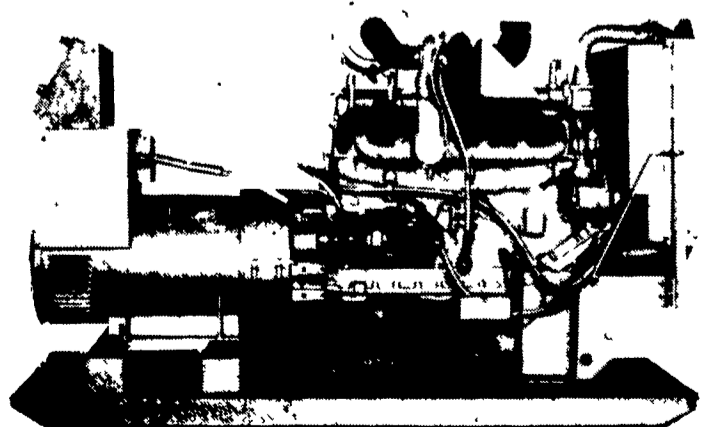
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