



ADAMSTOWN EQUIPMENT

Maximum Yield

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Growing Season Review

The 1997 growing year can be summed up this way: Stress upon stress upon stress. In fact, there was a time, as he was driving up Rt. 81 through the Virginia Shenandoah Valley in the summer last year, when one agronomist "wondered whether the weather was going to give us a crop at all," said Mark Mattingly, agronomist with Hoffman Seeds.

Mattingly provided an overview of the past growing year to about 200 growers and agri-industry representatives who attended the 1998 Pennsylvania Corn and Soybean Conference recently at the Holiday Inn in Grantville.

The last corn growing season was "not hot, not a season of high growing degree units, not a high-moisture year, but a low-disease pressure year because of low foliage," said Mattingly.

Some pests were predominant in other agronomic crops in a year that some growers have decided was nothing but finicky, when it came to the weather. Alfalfa had historically high levels of potato leafhopper, soybean fields were infested with spider mite, and European corn borer was a predominant insect that attacked corn.

A combination of a dry growing year, with an emergent season that was anything but normal, according to the agronomist, and insect pressure created "stress on stress" conditions for corn.

"Everything we can do to reduce stress can bring about a healthier plant and a healthier life for the plant," Mattingly noted.

What made the particular growing season so challenging was the on-again, off-again personality to the weather.

Because of the cool, wet spring, planting season began late for many growers. This affected some crops drastically. As a result of the continued wet, cool conditions in the spring, corn stayed in the ground long after it should have emerged. And the longer the corn remains in the ground, the greater chance fungus and insects can destroy it.

Also, wet weather plagued harvest of the crop well into the end of last year. Some test plots in New York State didn't see results until February.

Mattingly offered tips for growers to plan for "agronomic consequences" of an unpredictable season:

- Use well-tuned and calibrated equipment. Seed and herbicide placement need to be precise.

- Ensure there are alternative planting dates, labeled Plan B or Plan C, with different varieties, to work with the different weather patterns that can affect crops.

- Residue management is critical. Remove the trash from the field to ensure seed emergence. Too much trash can keep the fields too cool, working against seed emergence.

- Hybrid and variety selection are critical. Use readily adaptable varieties. Some varieties can be more tolerable to gray leaf spot. Luckily, the mid-season droughts in the area and dry conditions throughout the region kept the fungus at bay.

- Planting depth is critical in corn. Growers can end up placing the seed either too deep or too shallow. If corn is planted at 1-inch depth or less, secondary root systems can develop on the surface, easily affected by the stresses of dry conditions or herbicide interaction.

- Timely weed control. It's always a "constant" in the business, Mattingly noted.

The agronomist reviewed the various types of technologies to deal with corn borer, including Bt hybrids and Bt hybrids with IMI tolerance.

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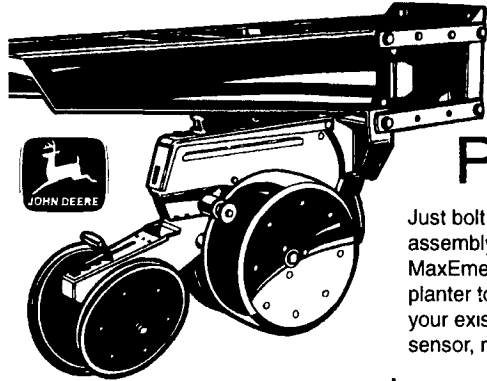
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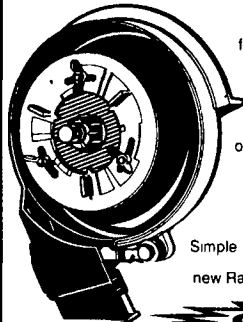


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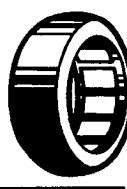
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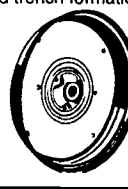
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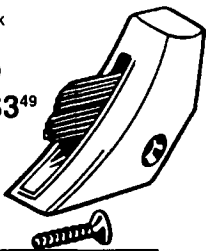
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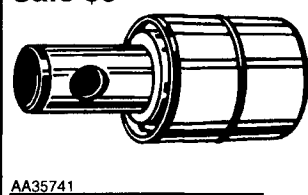


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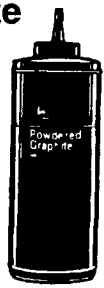


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