

Difference Is In The Details

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deep fall tillage when the rain can be absorbed instead of running off," he said. The channels help to put the water into the ground without losing soil. Leaving plenty of surface residue helps minimize erosion as well.

"Following deep tillage in the fall, in the spring I only lightly harrow the surface right before planting to keep from losing soil moisture," he said.

"Each time you work the ground up you're losing

moisture and breaking soil particles. The light harrowing leaves more crop residue that helps maintain soil moisture.

"In essence, it's no-till but deep-tillage in the fall."

The Difference

"The difference is in attention to details," he said. "The big things — everybody does that right. When there is plenty of rain, and I've paid attention to details, I can bring the corn to its full potential."

These details mean ensuring that the planter is set

properly, taking his time when he is working the ground, placing fertilizer in the root zone, carefully timing the planting, spraying, and harvesting, and not trying to save money on seed.

"I have to get seed with the most potential to not lose on yield," he said. "Seed is key. If you short-change seed, you're already behind before you started." Rohrer's winning crop was 115-day maturity from Pioneer.

A variety of commercial fertilizers contribute to Rohrer's crop growth. Rohrer uses 200 pounds per acre of 10-20-20 corn starter fertilizer. Pre-planting, he applies 200 units of nitrogen. His yield goal is 230 bushels per acre. Rohrer's winning yield in 2000 was 228.3 bushels per acre.

Even though Rohrer has farmed all of his life on the farm he owns now, he continues to experiment. "Last fall I had slit-tilled one-third, deep-chiseled one-third, and used the traditional mold-board plow on one-third of the farm. I want to see for myself which will work best."

The final yield results will help Rohrer make management decisions for next year's crop.

Additionally Rohrer does custom corn planting for area producers. The crops are



custom-harvested and marketed to local dairy producers.

Rohrer uses Pioneer seed. The variety that won the contest was Pioneer 33P67, a strain that he planted again this year, along with new varieties that may have even higher yield potential.

A Labor Of Love

Growing up on a farm gave him a lifelong interest in agriculture. "You have to farm because you love it. With high risks and few financial rewards, farming is a labor of love," he said.

The Rohrer family has rural roots. In addition to a brother who farms and operates a farm market on the land adjacent to his, Rohrer has another brother farming in Texas and a sister and brother-in-law on a farm in Juniata County.

In addition to farming his own land, Rohrer works full-time for Lancaster DHIA as a milk testing supervisor, taking milk samples and providing production records for 70 herds in the county.

"It works fairly well with farm work," he said. "I leave at 5:15 and get home at 9:30 in the morning, then leave again at 4:30 and get home at

8 p.m., so I have hours in the middle of the day to work here."

Rohrer began farming in 1986 on a rented farm, then purchased his family's home farm in 1989 from his parents. He is the sixth generation of the Rohrer family to own and operate the farm. He is joined by his wife, Rosie, and children Ryan, 11, Tyler, 7, and Kristyn, 5.

His sons are avid soccer players and his wife operates "Rosie's Creative Cakes," an in-home business.

The family raises 50 acres of corn and soybeans along with 10 acres of grapes, a new addition to the farm. This year they will harvest their first crop of grapes. As for future plans, Rohrer is not looking to expand but will direct his energies toward grape production.

He is a member of the Pennsylvania Master Corn Growers Association.

Dwight is also on the leadership team as an elder at East Petersburg Mennonite church. Additionally he is a member of an organization for burn survivors, besides serving as vice-chairman on the board of the Mennonite Financial Federal Credit Union.

Identify Ear Molds

Bob Anderson
Lancaster County
Extension Agent

As we progress through the corn grain, corn growers should be thinking about the possibilities of ear molds. Detection of these molds before harvest is an excellent way to avoid feeding problems later. Knowing that the problem exist before harvest may avoid feeding problems later according to extension livestock feed specialists.

Dr. Gary Munkovold, extension plant pathologist in Iowa, suggests that in checking fields for molds, the grower should husk at least 100 plants scattered throughout the field. He says it is important to check each field separately based on hybrid, tillage and rotation history and planting date because he has found that each of these factors can affect the occurrence of ear molds.

Identifying that a mold exists is only the first step — the mold itself should be identified because their potential impact is different based on the mold found. Munkovold said, "remember, certain ear rots are a warning sign to suspect toxins, but ear rots do not always lead to toxin problems."

Gibberella ear rot is caused by the fungus *Gibberella zeae* — it can be identified most readily by the red or pink color of the mold. However, in some cases it can appear white. It usually begins at the tip of the ear but can rot the entire ear. Gibberella occurs more commonly when the weather is cool and wet after silking. Gibberella can produce vomitoxin and zearalenone.

Diplodia ear rot appears as a white mold beginning at the base of the ear. The mold and the kernels then turn a grayish brown color and rot the entire ear. A very distinguishing characteristic of Diplodia is the appearance of raised black bumps called pycnidia on the moldy husk or kernels.

Aspergillus ear rot is generally more of a problem for corn in storage. It appears as a gray-green powdery mold. In the field, it is more common on hot dry years. It can grow at temperatures above 90 degrees and with corn moisture as low as 15 percent.



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