

Farming A Lifetime Pursuit

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adjacent farm where they built a 3,400-head hog finishing unit. In addition 120,000 broilers are housed on the home farm.

This summer the family weathered a fire which burnt a chicken house to the ground. In only seven weeks, however, two single-story houses replaced the original house, according to Hershey. The broilers and hogs are produced under contract.

If livestock and his own acres were not enough to keep Hershey occupied, he does custom farming, including planting and combining, for other producers. The custom combining is the biggest sector, said Hershey, who did over 1,000 acres this season. To help out, Shirley takes care of the chickens during the day. She, however, is busy operating her own kennel on the farm.

After dairying for 20 years, he sold the dairy, put up a chicken house, and six years ago bought his neighbor's farm to build a 3,400-hog finishing unit.

The fields, however, are where Hershey most enjoys spending his time. "I like working in the field and watching crops grow to maturity and to be able to harvest it. There are different challenges as far as new corn genetics or herbicide programs available to see how they might or might not work in my program."

Management Techniques

"Placing seed at the proper depth is something that is overlooked a lot. It really does make a difference on how the seed germinates," Hershey said. Hershey plants the seeds at least an inch and a half deep. A seed protectant, a fungicide, accompanies each seed at planting.

"It helps the roots develop — it seems like the roots grow too much on top of the ground if it's planted too shallow."

Hershey does not use any commercial fertilizer. Although he sells the broiler manure he uses the hog

manure for crop acres. "It's easier to handle and nutrient-wise, it seems to fit our nutrient management plan better," he said.

He applies 7,000-10,000 gallons of liquid hog manure per acre per year. Using the liquid hog manure amounts to a savings of \$100-\$150 per acre, he calculates, of fertilizer costs.

Besides the fertilizer he sidedresses anhydrous ammonia when the corn is 16-24 inches tall. "A boost of nitrogen at that stage has been working well in my program," he said.

Although management of fertilizer and tilling practices are essential to a good crop, the moisture factor is also important. "I couldn't obtain high yields without the Lord sending the rain," he said.

Hershey has used 90 percent Pioneer seed since he started farming. This time he used Pioneer 33A14 seed for his winning crop. He used the strain again this year, along with different strains that he is experimenting with or has observed promising results in last year. Another strain, in fact, had out-yielded the winning lot but contest lots have to be chosen in the summer.

Tillage practices are another management key, said Hershey. Soil compaction decreases the chance of a healthy, high-yielding crop. Producers should avoid "working over the ground before it's fit to be on," he said. "It's key to yields. I'm very particular about that. Every year is different as far as when the soil is ready. The calendar might say it's time to be planting, but if it's too wet or too cold, I don't feel it's an advantage to be out there too early."

Seventy-five percent of the corn is no-tilled, with the remaining 25 percent of the fields minimum tilled. "Especially this past year, when we were hit pretty hard with the drought this season, the no-till crops really had an edge," he said.

Hershey no-tills into soybean stubble, "which I've found works with my opera-

tion," he said. The barley and wheat fields are tilled.

Wintertime finds Hershey concentrating on hauling grain to the mill or selling the hay and straw he harvests off of 20 acres. The winter months also provide time to repair equipment and plan for spring planting.

An Industry In Motion

Agriculture has proven to be a quickly-changing business — a challenge that he has met with by continuing his own education. "I've learned a lot by attending agricultural meetings and by trial and error," he said.

A corn and soybean conference he attended two years ago in Albuquerque has also

expanded his knowledge about farming. "I felt it was very worthwhile," he said. "It was two days packed with seminars. I got to meet other farmers from throughout the U.S. and came away from there with new ideas and new gusto to go home and do a better job with planting and marketing practices. That year they really challenged farmers to be businessmen in marketing crops."

Although his father, Eby Hershey, gave him valuable lessons about farming growing up, farming has changed, according to Hershey. "Technology and genetically-altered seed has put a different twist on agriculture," he said.

In addition, believes Her-

shey, marketing has become paramount to producers. "You almost have to be a businessman — to be market smart," he said. "I have a DTN screen that I check every day." He sells his gain on contract several times throughout the year.

The couple has three children: Marc, a senior at Elizabethtown College; Erica, 21, who is hoping to soon enter the graphic design field; and Alicia, a freshman at Temple University. Marc, who is studying accounting, has taken over the farm's bookkeeping for several years now.

Hershey is also involved in the Manheim Young Farmers group and the Elizabethtown Brethren in Christ church.




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PENNSYLVANIA BEST SEED CORN

Summary of Hybrid Characteristics

Hybrid	Maturity Days	Optimum Final Stand	Yield	Vigor	Root Types	Plant Health	Heat/Drought Tolerance	Added Values
B17V First Stalk	99-101	27-31,000	VG	E	O,P	E-	G	Exceptional Yield For Maturity
B54V Big & Beautiful	106-108	22-27,000	E+	E+	O,S	VG	G+	Good Dual Purpose Superior Vigor
B55C First Fruit II	103-105	24-29,000	E-	VG	M,P	E-	E	Resistant to Wildlife
B60F Solid Gold	107-108	26-30,000	VG	VG	S,P	VG	VG	Companion to B60C
B63C Bin Buster	108-110	24-27,000	E+	E	O	VG	E+	Superior Yield Monster Ears
B64	110-112	24-27,000	E++	VG	O	E-	VG	Top Yield Watch For Root Lodging
B65 Magic Bullet	109-112	26-29,000	E+	VG	O,D	E-	E-	Superior Yield/Plant Intact
B81D Mammoth	114-116	23-27,000	E	VG	S,H,O	E+	E-	Rugged/Super Corn Consistency

E - Excellent
 VG - Very Good
 G - Good
 D - Deep Roots (Good For Sandy Soils & Drought Conditions)
 P - Penetrating Roots (Good For Compaction)
 H - Healthy Roots (Good Under Muck and Waterlogged Conditions)
 O - Offensive Roots (Excellent For High Yield Conditions)
 S - Surface Roots (Excellent For Shallow Soils, Or High Fertility)
 M - Massive Roots (Large Root Volume Can Handle Most Root Stresses)



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