

## Back Run Farm

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local butcher shop.

Johnston uses Pioneer and Hubner seed — usually 113-day corn. "I'm not really in too much of a hurry to get it off," he said. "We have pretty decent fall season. It doesn't snow too early around here."

The soil that Johnston works with is limestone. He plants hay in the shale-soil areas.

"Compared to last year, it's almost half to 40 percent loss," he said. The soybeans, however, seem to be more drought resistant and he expects only a 20 percent loss.

"We had a few rains when they were shooting pods, and they filed out pretty nicely," he said. A local mill buys the soybeans and corn for feed.

"Feed rations started calling for soybeans, so the local mill decided to begin to roast beans," he said.

Johnston plants in 30-inch rows, as dictated by the planter. "When we were buying a corn planter, we found a decent one with narrow rows, and the yields are pretty decent," he said.

He uses liquid and granular chemicals for fertilizer. All the crops are no-tilled, allowing Johnston to make only three passes over the field in the course of a season.

"I read a lot of information about subsoiling," he said.

That technique, which Johnston does every three years, is "the only tillage I do, and it seems to be a big help."

He also soils tests every few years. "Around here, many farms are deficient in phosphorus, and that seems to play a big role" in yields, he said. "I always try to keep that up, if anything."

He is also careful to get the pH adjusted to whatever the soil test call for. Rotating soybeans, he said, helps since soybeans put nitrogen back into the soil. He also puts 150 units of nitrogen per acres on.

In addition to subsoiling, rotating soybeans, and corn helps to loosen the soil.

His corn usually

ends up as shell corn as opposed to silage.

Soil fertility, a good herbicide program, and planter maintenance are keys to crop yields, believes Johnston.

"A lot of times it (crop yield) revolves around soil fertility and composition," he said. "Pay close attention to the soil test and watch pH. Don't let your soil tests fall behind." His crops receive a starter fertilizer two inches by two inches from the seed

placement.

Along with soil fertility, soil compaction makes a difference in yield. Getting out in the field and chopping haylage early, when the ground is still wet, could be detrimental to the soil. "You have a ton of silage going over your field and that's going to cause a lot of compaction," he said.

Johnston no-tills 100 percent of his fields, but it is not a program that will work for everyone, he said. "No-till has

worked for me, however producers must find the niche that works for their farm, depending on what their operation is.

"If you're a dairy farmer you can use one management system, but a crop farmer needs a different management system." A dairy farmer, for instance, emptying manure storage tanks, will need to incorporate the fertilizer.

The first time producers apply herbicides, they should

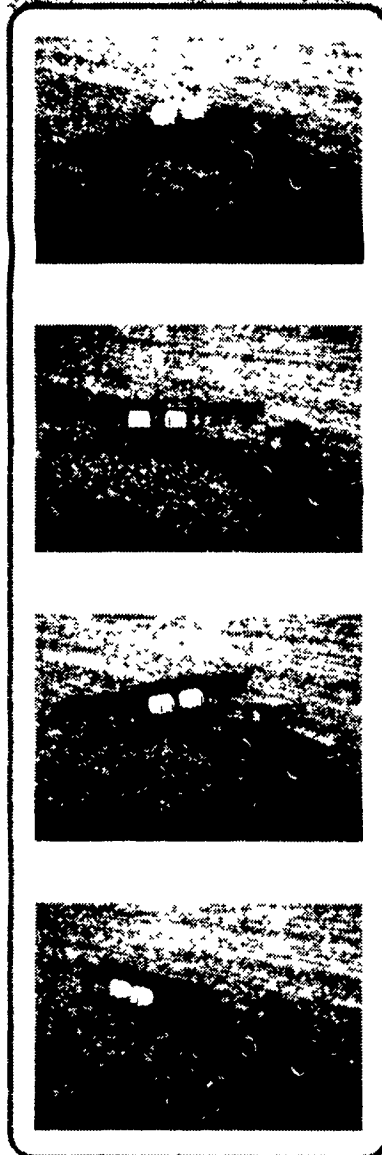
not skimp on a product, he advises, since you'll have to re-spray. Put the recommend dosage on the first time around. This minimizes trips across the field, which contributes to soil compaction.

Johnston rotates Roundup Ready soybeans to help clean up problem weeds for the following year. We don't use too much insecticide because of the corn and soybean rotation, he said. Corn borer and root-

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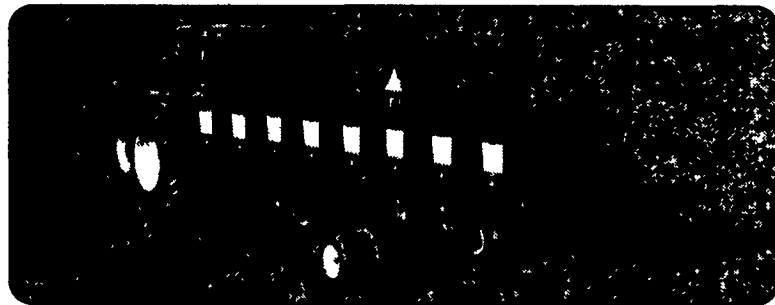
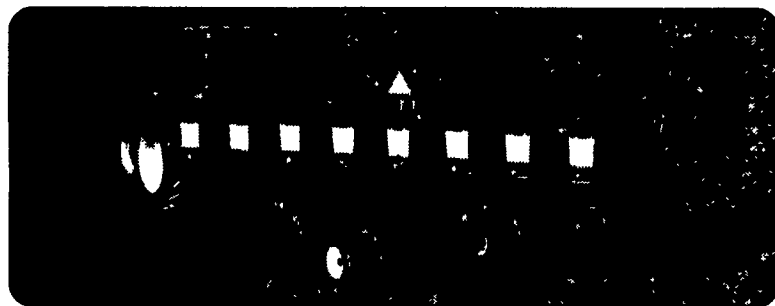
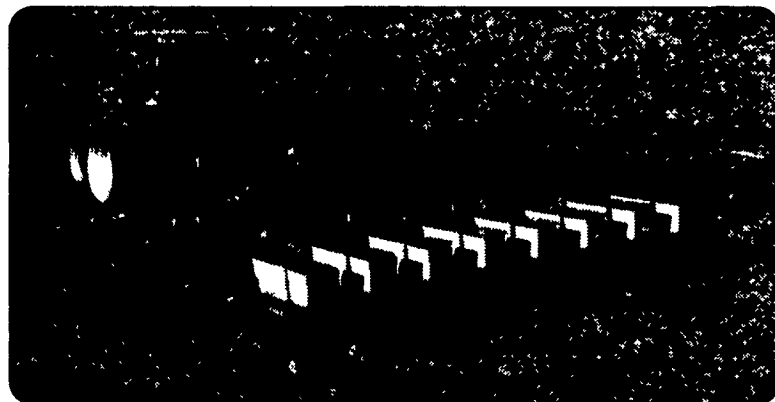
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