

Ag Innovations Showcased In Cecil County, Maryland

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Lancaster Farming Staff

FAIR HILL, Md. — Studies in Maryland show that seeding rates for corn, soybeans, and wheat can often be reduced somewhat without hurting yields.

That was one of the research findings farmers heard about at the Cecil County Ag Showcase this week. The event, put on by Maryland Cooperative Extension, took place on farmland near the Cecil County Fairgrounds, in conjunction with the fair.

"There's been a lot of emphasis the last few years to keep those (plant) populations up," said Bob Kratochvil, Maryland extension specialist. But Maryland farmers shouldn't always necessarily go along with recommended rates, he noted.

With corn, for example, much of the research is done in mid-western states, where soils are better suited for top corn yields. Recommendations of 30-35,000 plants per acre for grain production can be on the high side for Maryland, according to Kratochvil.

He recommends shooting for populations of 24-28,000 corn plants/acre for grain production. On the most productive soils or with irrigation, farmers could do well with populations of up to 32,000 plants per acre, he said.

Corn silage producers should aim for populations of 35-40,000 plants/acre.

For soybeans, Maryland agronomists have long recommended 175,000 seeds/acre for conventional plantings, but a recent three-year study indicates yields are practically as strong when the seeding rate is cut to 140,000 seeds/acre.

"Soybeans have a tremendous ability to compensate for low plant populations," Kratochvil said.

In double-cropping systems, he suggested seeding rates of 180,000 seeds/acre, down 20 percent from previous recommendations.

And, while high seeding rates for wheat encourage good primary tiller development, studies have also shown that wheat seeding rates can also be reduced without a significant effect on yields.

A 2002 study on two Maryland farms showed that a fairly wide range of populations yielded the same number of bushels/acre.

On one of the re-



Ag Showcase visitors view a baling demonstration.

search farms, populations of 17, 20, and 23 plants per row foot yielded the same harvest. Populations of 10 and 13 plants per foot, however, yielded less.

One the other farm, all the test populations from 10 to 23 plants per foot produced the same yields.

Kratochvil recommends aiming for 17 viable seeds per foot — or 125 million seeds/acre. That's down from previous recommendations of 1.5 million seeds/acre, and can save farmers \$3-6 per acre on seed costs.

He also discussed this year's generally poor wheat crop. The rainy spring weather was largely responsible for low test weights and high levels of scab found in wheat throughout the region, he said.

Yields ranged from 20-55 bushels/acre, with test weights as low as 20 pounds/bushel — a third of the standard test weight for wheat.

The Ag Showcase offered farmers the chance to witness some new hay handling equip-



Scott Rowe shows multiflora rose plots he used in study on how to better control this invasive plant.

ment in action, talk to equipment dealers, see a lineup of antique tractors, hear a safety talk on "hidden hazards on the farm," and check out the results of a multiflora rose control study conducted onsite.

Scott Rowe, ag and natural resources extension educator in Cecil County, showed the effects that various herbicides, mechanical, and biological controls had on multiflora rose thickets.

Three different herbicides — Hi-Dep 2,4-D; Roundup; and Ally were applied to multiflora rose plots in May 2002.

Plots, were also treated mechanically, either alone or in conjunction with herbicide treatments. This included standard mowing, and also handling the

rose thickets with a MeriCrusher, a piece of equipment that is similar to an asphalt grinder, Rowe noted.

The MeriCrusher did "a good job of tearing out the rose, grinding it up, and incorporating much of the trash into the soil," according to Rowe. The MeriCrusher also provided a seedbed that allowed good establishment of newly-seeded pasture mix.

Both in conjunction with an herbicide or when used alone, the MeriCrusher treatment has allowed "very little rose regrowth" to date.

Goats and sheep can also provide excellent control "as these animals will go right past 'good' grass to get to multiflora rose."

For more information, contact Rowe at (410) 996-5280.

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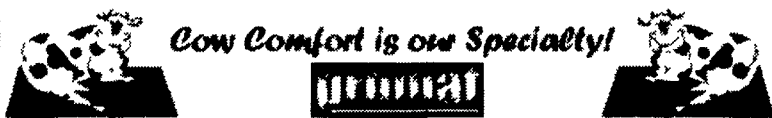
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