

Lehigh Cooperative Extension Conducts Tune-Up Clinic

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MERTZTOWN (Lehigh Co.) — A fall equipment tune-up clinic, complete with pig roast and sweet corn dinner, provided information for farmers about combines, headers, and sprayers.

Hosted by Mertztown farmers Dan Hunsicker and Jody Menzies, the clinic was a spin-off of the crop conferences conducted each winter by the southeast region of Penn State Cooperative Extension agents and sponsoring ag industries.

Several years ago the extension agents and ag dealers realized it was wiser to combine their educational meetings, which were essentially covering the same material, and the idea of crop conferences throughout the winter months has been quite successful.

As an added benefit, a planning committee of southeast region ag agents and ag industry thought they would provide a one evening tune-up clinic and treat those in attendance to a dinner of pig roast with country fresh sweet corn, limiting the attendance to 60 people. What was intended to be a one-night clinic filled so quickly it required a second night be sched-

uled. Both evening sessions were filled to capacity.

Each evening was divided into two one-hour educational sessions where you could select the combine of your choice — two John Deere or two Case IH — for one hour of tune-up instruction and then move onto separate half hour sessions on headers and sprayers.

The combines, headers, and sprayers used were either owned by hosts Hunsicker and Menzies, neighbors, or provided by participating dealers.

Sponsors of the evening were the Southeast Pennsylvania Crops Conferences and Bayer, BASF, Doebler's, DOW AgroSciences, FS - the Natural Resource, Martin Limestone, Monsanto, Penn State College of Ag Sciences, Pioneer, Syngenta and Timac USA, along with the Pennsylvania Department of Ag.

Those providing equipment and technical expertise were Adamstown Equipment Inc., Eckroth Equipment Inc., Hardi Inc., Hooper Inc., Kyle Henninger, Dan Hunsicker, Lehigh Ag Equipment Inc., MillerPro Inc. and Zimmerman Farm Service Inc.

In reviewing the combines and headers — either the JD or Case

IH — that were at the clinic, the tech reps went over the basic items to check going into the fall harvest season. There were older models and new 2003 models of each brand to compare, and the technicians pointed out the improved features seen on the newer models that make operation easier and more efficient.

One of the main points that was stressed by those at both the combine and header sessions was how to set up the machine to prevent grain loss, and if you do notice a grain loss, how to determine where it is coming from.

While Hooper's representatives, Bob Sangery and Nelson Martin, service technicians; Gary Houseman, sales and Ken Diller, sales service were going over the 2003 Case IH axial flow 2388 they brought to the demonstration, they mentioned one of the first areas to check is the grain coming up the feeder house it often pushes in the center, and sometimes the corners of the door in the throat are pushed open, creating an area of grain loss.

They explained that if you notice a grain loss in the field, it doesn't necessarily mean the leak or problem is in the back of the combine — it could be in the front of the machine. The easiest and best thing to do is do

a dead stop in the field and divide your machine mentally into three sections — front, middle, and back. Measure the length of the combine and visualize where the loss is occurring. Sometimes it is as easy as a clean out door that was never closed.

Over at the demonstration by Robert Ziegler, service manager;



Left, James Zimmerman of Zimmerman Farm Equipment, Bethel, and Roy Bassett, MillerPro sales representative, review sprayer operation.

Dan Eckroth, owner/sales; and Bruce Schock, service department, of Eckroth Equipment Inc., Orefield, Ziegler was going over the 2206 6-row 30-inch Case IH corn head and pointing out areas where to look for loss of grain. An interesting fact that one farmer found interesting was that Ziegler recommended setting the two end rows of your corn head 2 inches higher than the others. That farmer said he was going to make that adjustment when he got home.

In reviewing the parts and operation of the sprayers represented at the clinic — MillerPro and Hardi — the technicians stressed the need to control accuracy and calibration for a good efficient application of spray material.

Before going into the field check various parts of your sprayer including the tips and nozzles. Each farming operation is different so

there is no easy answer to that often heard question — "How long or how much can I spray with these nozzles?"

Ed Starzek, tech manager for Hardi Inc., was reviewing the Hardi Navigator 575 sprayer and said, "You can have the fanciest, newest sprayer with all the gadgets, but you want to keep the boom as stabilized as possible so make whatever adjustments possible to keep the boom steady."

He explained that if the booms on your sprayer are bouncing and waving or rocking you are not getting even distribution of spray material in the field.

When asked what point he would remember from the evening, Donald Fink of Germansville, Lehigh County, said there was a lot of information — some things that he knew and had forgotten and some new points to take home with him.

Steve Murphy, a farmer from Kresgeville in Monroe County, attended the session on the Case IH combine and the points he got from the session were — on the IH combine they brought up good points of how to set up from front to back — if don't have front end set up properly nothing else will work properly. You have to check from the header throughout the rest of the machine. You want the grain to come into the machine evenly. If you have problems, do a dead stop in the field and go over the machine to see how the grain lays inside the combine.

For his view of the clinic as a presenter, Roy Bassett, MillerPro Sales Rep, said he believes some had their eyes opened when he discussed how the farmers were spending more money than necessary if not able to calibrate their application other than by how fast they are covering the field. He also thinks most owners are not up on the new technology available with the newer sprayers and that if they are tuned in to the new technology, they can save on expenses and care for the soil.

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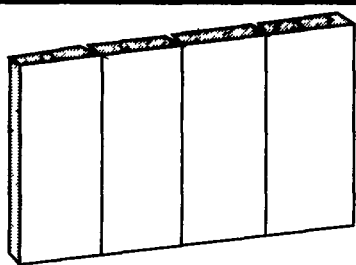
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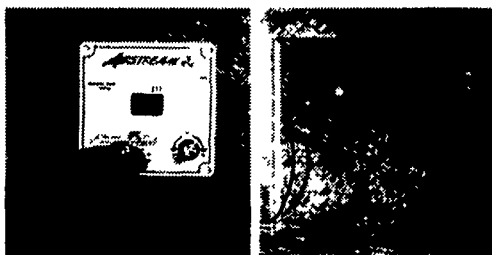
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