

THE LEADING EDGE

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A PUBLICATION DEDICATED TO MAXIMIZING YIELD POTENTIAL

Proper Execution of Vertical Tillage Benefits Producers

Vertical tilling is one of the most cost-effective and practical ways to control residue and energize the seedbed for planting operations. The decision to use a vertical tillage tool should be based on an understanding of the proper implementation. When used correctly, vertical tillage tools can lead to real savings in terms of time and money.

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Vertical tillage systems are proven to increase yields. According to a five year Farm Journal study done in East Central Illinois, vertical tillage increased yields by 12.7 bushels per acre. In this study vertical tillage was compared to conventional tillage, and all field and soil types were tested. Plants raised in a vertical tillage system were found to be more resistant to drought, make better use of nutrients, and have healthier stalks and root systems.

Growers using vertical tillage can get into spring fields to get them ready earlier than conventional tillage. Vertical tillage warms the cool, wet soil more quickly, energizing the seedbed for maximum growth and yield potential. When spring planting is delayed because of heavy rains, vertical tilling can be used to fluff and warm the soil. It can also be used to break crusting following heavy rains.



Vertical Tillage Attachment
on JD 726 Finisher

With high residue crops such as wheat, corn, and soybeans, vertical tilling can cut heavy residue to enhance planting operations. Vertical tillage allows for shallow seedbed preparation, decreasing the risk of excess soil density below the root zone. Time for seedbed preparation is reduced allowing for an earlier planting date.

No-till practices have been proven to improve soil quality, minimize erosion, save time and money for farmers. For more information on the benefits of no-till farming see Leading Edge Issue 51, *Farmers are Saying "Yes" to No-Till.*

Growers often use a tillage pass to prepare the field for seeding. These growers can easily switch to vertical tillage by adding compatible vertical tillage attachments to their tillage tools.

Switching to vertical tillage is very feasible for growers practicing other tillage methods, like chiseling or field cultivating. Equipment available for a vertical tillage system includes a vertical tillage attachment that is designed to fit most tillage shanks.

Here are some general guidelines for operating vertical tillage equipment:

- The coultter blades on the tillage tool should be spaced on 6-inch centers and made to match the desired amount of tillage and residue sizing.
- Set or mount coultter blades to run perpendicular to the soil.
- Vertical tillage tools should be operated at a speed of 6 to 10 mph.
- In spring applications vertical tillage coultter blades should be set for shallow seedbed preparation, which decreases the risk of excess soil density below the root zone.
- The coultter blade selection should be matched to achieve the desired amount of tillage and residue sizing.
- Vertical tillage tools can be run parallel to the row or at a slight angle.



Cross section of field after vertical tillage



Vertical Tillage Attachment on JD 2400

Vertical tillage can be completed earlier in the spring or fall, is easily undertaken with minimal equipment expense, and offers multiple benefits leading to healthy crops. All these factors combine into a quick return on investment with time and money savings.

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