

THE LEADING EDGE

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A PUBLICATION DEDICATED TO MAXIMIZING YIELD POTENTIAL

Set the Stage for the Ideal Seedbed with the Right Residue Management Techniques This Fall

Practicing proper residue management in the fall pays off considerably in the spring. No-till production agriculture techniques leave significant amounts of crop residue on the soil surface, protecting the soil from wind and water erosion and improving water permeation and soil tilth. The benefits of such practices are clear; however, residue can also present an array of problems for growers.



Spreading a consistent layer of residue at harvest is crucial to good residue management.

In its most concentrated form, residue can isolate the soil from the warmth of the sun, inhibit planting in the spring, diminish seed-to-soil contact, and decelerate seed germination and growth. So, how can growers reap the benefits and get a jumpstart on avoiding such problems in the spring?

Managing residue as a part of a no-till system is a long-term commitment, and growers need to use a systematic approach beginning at harvest and continuing on through the planting season. Spreading a consistent layer of residue at harvest is the right place to start. Full residue coverage can reduce soil erosion up to 98% by slowing and trapping runoff and allowing for better water infiltration.



*Shark Tooth® wheels on planter in heavy residue

Residue needs to be spread out evenly at harvest to ensure

consistency and optimal planting conditions in the spring. Growers may choose to cut residue to a manageable height or size residue after harvest with new vertical tillage attachment alternatives.

Caution must be exercised when cutting residue, as cutting too much away can leave soil vulnerable to erosion, disease, and emergence problems. Chopped residue also has a stronger propensity to clog or plug equipment later. If utilizing this technique, it is imperative that residue be cut at 1 to 2 feet for maximum manageability. Doing so minimizes the potential for equipment tire damage during field operation.

Sizing residue after harvest with a vertical tillage attachment is a better, safer alternative. A number of growers have discovered the advantages of vertical tillage and successfully incorporated such attachments into their operations.



*Vertical Tillage Attachment

Vertical tillage attachments, like the one recently introduced by Yetter Manufacturing Company, can be used in the fall to lightly till the soil and incorporate and size residue, which facilitates residue decomposition.

Such attachments work well in both no-till and conventional tillage operations, and sized residue improves residue flow for planters in the spring. Vertical tillage extends the growing season, prepares the soil to warm more quickly in early spring, and leaves the perfect seedbed for maximum yield potential. Vertical tillage is also a practical way to dry out wet soils. In addition, vertical tillage attachments allow for shallow seedbed preparation, which decreases the risk of excess soil density below the root zone.

*Patent Pending.

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