

THE LEADING EDGE

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A PUBLICATION DEDICATED TO MAXIMIZING YIELD POTENTIAL

Making the Switch to Corn-on-Corn Residue Management and Beyond

Switching from a corn-soybean rotation to one with multiple years of corn-on-corn is starting to look like an attractive option to many producers. The increase in market value for corn and increased demand due to the focus on alternative energy sources and Ethanol is enough in itself to get people excited. When those factors are combined with the pest and disease problems potentially facing soybeans, corn-on-corn seems like a no-brainer.



Residue Manager with *Shark Tooth®
Wheels on John Deere Planter

But corn-on-corn requires attention to detail in order to maximize profit. While the same set of skills and knowledge are required, they need to be applied in a precise manner. Residue management, tillage practices, disease control, and hybrid selection all need to be finely tuned for a corn-on-corn operation to succeed.

Playing Nitrogen Catch-Up

Soybeans leave behind nitrogen that can be utilized by corn the following year. Excess nitrogen also facilitates the breakdown of residue. Planting corn-on-corn eliminates this excess nitrogen supply; an additional rate of nitrogen per acre is necessary to make up for the loss.

To speed residue breakdown, consider a fall application of nitrogen, but complete a cost/benefit analysis for your soil conditions. This nitrogen may not be available for the plant to resource in the spring. Other options are to replace the nitrogen with a combination of a side-dressing and a starter fertilizer

application, or with a double dose of side-dressing. Always complete a soil nutrient evaluation prior to planning your fertilizer application process—some producers are finding that they can successfully reduce the amount of nitrogen applied and realize a cost savings.

Dealing with Tough Residue

No- or minimum-till operations considering corn-on-corn must also plan to overcome the obstacle of additional residue.

Planning for corn-on-corn residue management begins in the fall. When combining, the corn head should be positioned to leave only 8 to 10 inches of stalk standing, allowing for air movement and encouraging residue breakdown. Last year's cornstalks still leave behind more to contend with than bean stubble. This residue harbors diseases and is an ideal home for insects. Root balls from last year's plants also have an allelopathic affect on new plants, which identify these old roots as competition.



Ultra narrow Titan™ with *Shark Tooth® wheels on John Deere planter

Planter Residue Management Tools are an attractive solution to residue management issues. Products like SharkTooth® wheels from Yetter Manufacturing are designed to be gentle on the soil, but tough on residue. The SharkTooth® wheels' Clean Release™, backwards-angle teeth grab and sever residue for easier removal and are guaranteed not to plug, even in the toughest residue conditions. The design allows for constant contact with soil surface and minimal soil disturbance.

SharkTooth® wheels, and other residue management tools from Yetter, can be combined with fertilizer application tools. Doug Long, Store Manager with Riverland FS in Watega, Illinois, had several satisfied customers after one-year trials with Yetter NH₃ toolbar-compatible residue managers. "The results satisfied even our most particular producer," Long said. "We were pleased with the toolbar's handling and the outcome from the SharkTooth® Residue Managers in corn residue."

Seed Selection and Weed Control

Choosing seed hybrids compatible with corn-on-corn is also

important. Many seed specialists recommend that no field be planted with the same hybrid back-to-back. Choose hybrids that are genetically disposed to handle the diseases your crop has been known to face. And remember: the fact that these plants have amazing disease resistance also means they will resist breakdown and potentially add to your residue.

Weed control can also be more challenging in corn-on-corn, and one-pass programs may not be effective. Consider applying a residual herbicide slightly ahead of planting. Follow up with scouting to determine the weeds that are likely to be a problem and apply a fitting post-emergence product.

Treat Your Planter Well

The precise nature of corn-on-corn also requires extra attention to your planter. All parts of the row-unit should be inspected and replaced if worn or damaged. Planter adjustments should also be made to match soil conditions, tillage conditions, and changes in weather. Precise adjustments help achieve proper seed depth and spacing for maximized yields. Extra down-pressure may need to be applied in no-till conditions to contend with additional residue, and a planting speed of 4 to 5 miles per hour will ensure that seed delivery is uniform and reduce planter bounce.



Residue Managers on Case Planter

For ultimate control in corn-on-corn conditions, consider equipping your planter with residue managers, updated coulter systems, fertilizer attachments, and twisted drag chains to help close the slot, fertilize, and plant in one field pass. The correct planter and residue management combination for your operation should eliminate row unit bounce, hair-pinning of residue, and plugging of the v-closing wheels, while facilitating the warming of soil without throwing residue over the row. Yetter Manufacturing offers multiple planter attachment options, and their sales team is trained to help producers build the correct combination of solutions for their unique conditions.

Know Your Soil

Soil management is key in corn-on-corn operations. Investing in proper drainage will help ensure the success of corn-on-corn. Corn has a narrow planting window, and producers planting additional corn acres face the problem of potentially missing the window and hurting yield. Avoiding soil compaction in corn-on-corn will also result in better plants. A penetrometer can gauge the effectiveness of the current process and possibly alert producers to correlations between unhealthy plants and poor root systems resulting from compaction.

Planning for corn-on-corn is not an exact science, and agriculture is an unpredictable industry. Corn-on-corn has the potential for big pay-offs, but as with many other things in farming, it requires taking on some risk. Before committing to corn-on-corn, analyze your resources and capabilities carefully and make a decision based on a realistic assessment of what fits your soil and your operation.

*Patent pending

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