

# THE LEADING EDGE

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## A PUBLICATION DEDICATED TO MAXIMIZING YIELD POTENTIAL

### Get Picky About Your Planter

#### Precision Adjustments Critical for Optimal Performance

While an extremely late harvest will understandably have growers ready for a break, during the winter months, it is wise to be attentive to one of the most critical pieces of equipment in agriculture: the seed-planting implement. Planters, drills, and air seeders are called upon to manage residue, slice through the soil to the perfect seeding depth, facilitate solid seed-to-soil contact, and close the seed trench fully. Each of these four areas is important to evaluate, to adjust, and to adapt each year, and many tasks can be accomplished before the planting season.



Check the planter to make sure the toolbar height is correct and running level, all wear points are in good condition, the seed meters are properly calibrated, and the proper attachments are added so it will perform at its highest level.

A 30-inch row planter operating at around 5 miles per hour, planting 30,000 or so seeds per acre, must meter a kernel approximately every 1/13 of a

second--from every meter on the planter. That's demanding a lot from an implement, and only one that has been adjusted with precision can meet these demands optimally.

Only well-adjusted planters start seeds off at consistent depths, leading to uniform emergence. When seeds emerge together and subsequently pollinate together, producers get the most out of their crop.

### **Be Prepared With the Right Equipment and Attachments**

After you add your planter attachments, make sure you still have the appropriate weight applied to your row units. Lack of pressure can result in skips and shallow seed planting. Excessive pressure will cause the seed to be planted too deeply into the soil. Inadequate pressure will cause the seed to be planted too shallow.

To operate properly, you must outfit your planter with the right attachments. If your system includes minimum tillage or no-till acres, adding row-cleaners will assist in preparing an ideal seedbed. Well adjusted row cleaners, clear debris from the seed trench so soil warms more quickly but leaves residue cover between rows. Regardless of the residue level, residue managers will remove obstructions from the seed row to allow the planter units to run smoothly.

To achieve proper seed-trench closing, growers may want to consider alternatives to rubber closing wheels. Spike closing wheels can seal the seed trench efficiently and improve seed-to-soil contact by fracturing the sidewall and significantly reducing the number of air pockets. Add a drag chain to fill in air pockets.



Spike Closing Wheels help reduce sidewall compaction, create good seed-to-soil contact, and properly close the seed trench.

### **Level Planters Key for Optimal Attachment Performance**

Adding row-unit mount attachments to a planter is a reason to take another look at your planter leveling, especially in no-till systems. Most attachments are designed to operate at a specific depth range, which they can only consistently do if your planter is running level to your soil. A level planter enables unit-mounted coulters to run a ½-inch above the seed double-disk opener while a frame-mounted fertilizer coulters may run 3 ½ inches deep. Most manufacturers recommend that unit mounted no-till coulters run 3/8-inch to ½-inch shallower than openers. Along with the leveling of the planter you also need to make sure the frame height is set correct, as this will effect the desired planting depth as well. (These depths are general guidelines for no-till settings. Always check your manufacturer's manual for specific recommendations for your tools.)

If your planter nose is tipped down, a multitude of complications are possible. Unit-mounted coulters will run below the seed double-disk opener, and frame-mounted fertilizer coulters will run deeper than 3 ½ inches, resulting in detrimental effects like air pockets below the seed and inconsistent seed depth. Also, down pressure on the seed drop is compromised, which could affect your yield as much as 27 bushels per acre, some tests have shown.

If the planter level is too low overall, row-cleaner attachments will trench instead of only moving debris. Water will stand in the seed trench. Seeds will emerge later than desirable and plant growth will be slowed.

### **More Things to Check for Optimal Planter Performance**

- **Adhere to the manufacturers' recommendations for tire-pressure.** Proper inflation keeps the toolbar level to the soil surface and ensures the "drive tires" are turning at the same speed. An under-inflated drive tire will do all the driving and increase the seeding population rate due to a smaller circumference.

[Read an in-depth planter preparation guide from a leading manufacturer of conservation tillage equipment.](#)

- **Inspect important parts for wear and tear.** Broken seed tubes, worn and unbalanced parallel linkage arms, warped disc opener blades, and worn depth-control wheels can negatively affect seed placement. Off-season inspection and timely replacement can save critical down-time during the busy spring season.
- **Care for your seed meter.** Make sure meters are free of seed this winter. Inspect all parts for signs of excessive wear like rust and replace if necessary. Calibrate your meter—it can add several bushels per acre to yields.
- **Test for good contact between double disk openers.** You'll need a business card and chalk. Slide the card, top-down, along the front of the disks until the card stops. Chalk that spot. Then, move the card to the rear side. Slide it forward until it stops and mark again. The distance between the two marks should measure more than two inches. Any less than that and it's time to reshape or replace the disks. (In general, disks must be more than 14 ½-inches in diameter for this test to be helpful.)
- **Check closing wheel alignment.** Set your planter on concrete and pull ahead about five feet. There should be a mark left behind the planter by the double disk openers. Does it run right down the centerline between the closing wheels? A closing wheel running too close to the mark means you should adjust the closing wheels to re-center these pieces. Special tools are now on the market to check closing wheel alignment as well as other planter components to insure proper alignment, depth and wear.

### **A Commitment to Precision Adjustment is Commitment to Better Yields**

Smart producers know profits start with the planter and end with the combine. Taking the time to properly set your planter will have a quick return on investment, while a failure to perform precision adjustment will result in less-than-ideal seed emergence



The Checker is a new tool which makes accurately adjusting the

and ultimately, disappointing yields. So, get  
picky about your planter over the winter months, and carry that commitment into the spring.

row unit and it's attachments  
easier than ever before.

**Visit [www.yetterco.com](http://www.yetterco.com) to review past issues of The Leading Edge and Yetter products that maximize your yield potential.**

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