

THE LEADING EDGE

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A PUBLICATION DEDICATED TO MAXIMIZING YIELD POTENTIAL

Plan to Focus on Seed Placement Next Spring to Increase Yields

Producers are planting more corn acres to take advantage of several factors: increased demand as ethanol becomes a trusted fuel source, less disease concern than for soybeans, and solid corn process. To get the most out of additional corn acres, growers need to work for consistent seed placement.

Horizontal and Vertical Seed Placement

Some Illinois studies indicate that there is little risk, and some reward, in raising plant populations to around 35,000 plants per acre in productive soils.

Both horizontal and vertical seed placement into a soil environment that provides good seed-soil contact are critical factors in producing top corn yields.

Proper seed placement as planters move down the row is one concern. Plants may compensate for gap in seed placement by producing more or larger ears, but overcrowded seeds hurt yields. Too much competition for light, water, and soil nutrients results in barren plants or unharvestable nubbins.

To increase yields, uniformity of size and emergence are two additional--and according to some experts, more critical--factors to which producers should pay attention. Consistency on both fronts can be facilitated by good seed placement. Hitting the ideal planting depth of 1.5 to 2 inches will help ensure seedlings emerge within 48 hours of each other.



Uniform emergence results from a properly prepared seedbed.

Properly maintained planter components are critical to achieving proper depth. Opener blades that have lost 3/8-inch in diameter are likely to be worn so thin that they are creating a pinched seed trench. This means the kernel may not drop to the bottom of the trench. Narrowed and worn seed tube guards can cause the same problem.

The penalty for uneven seedling emergence depends on how much variation develops. If one-fourth of the crop emerges about one week late, expect a yield loss of about 6%. If half the plants come up two weeks late, losses can reach 17%. [Click here to access an online tool to estimate yield loss from uneven corn heights.](#)

Effective seed firmers are also a good investment for ideal seed placement. Firmers ensure seeds' depth is uniform. They will increase the percentage of seeds that establish without rain, speed germination, and result in great uniformity in emergence timing.

In-Field Planter Maintenance Is Time Well Spent

To get optimal seed placement, growers must also pay extra attention to planters. Precise adjustments help achieve proper seed depth and spacing for maximized yields. Always start by consulting your owners' manual for operating and safety guidelines.

Your planter should be leveled in the field to ensure full range of motion for

parallel links and row units. Plan to get out of the tractor to check the planter and ensure it is still performing well. Adjustments should be made as often as needed to match soil conditions, tillage conditions, and changes in weather.



Consider investing in tools to measure whether your planter's attachments are in the proper location to perform as they are intended.

Try test planting a run with no seed and stop to make sure gauge wheels are in firm contact with the soil. Tighten down pressure springs if needed. Extra weight may need to be added to achieve proper down pressure in no-till conditions to contend with additional residue.

Traditionally, experts have recommended a planting speed of 4 to 5 miles per hour to ensure uniform seed delivery.

This speed will reduce row unit bounce. It may be tempting to increase speeds, especially as planter manufacturers tout their equipments ability to plant as fast as 8 miles per hour. However, inconsistent seed placement resulting in uneven emergence may be the consequence of faster planting.

Beef Up Planting Systems With Residue Managers



Row cleaners move residue from

Getting good seed to soil contact through residue, especially corn stubble, is a challenge that producers must overcome to reap high yields.

For ultimate seed placement, consider equipping your planter with residue managers. These tools help move residue and clods away from disc openers and

the seed bed, allowing for consistent seed placement. gauge wheels to allow them to operate smoothly.

Another benefit is the elimination of unit vibration or bounce. Seeds placed under these conditions are more likely to emerge uniformly.

In addition to residue managers, add 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 will help eliminate hair-pinning of residue and plugging of v-closing wheels. Residue managers will also help eliminate row-unit bounce to ensure a more even seed depth and facilitate the warming of the seed bed, resulting in quicker plant emergence.

No Substitute for the Right Start

Producers only have one chance to get the corn crop in the ground the right way. Those who pay attention to seed placement and planter maintenance are putting up their best defenses against yield-robbing poor emergence.

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