Prepare Your Planter for 2013

*Staying ahead of the game prevents future problems*

To ensure safety and proper performance, a planter should be inspected before and after each planting season. While the first step is to consult the operator’s manual for your specific planter, in this issue of the *Leading Edge* you’ll find a list of essential points to check before planting season, as well as recommendations and information on inspections and repairs.

**Inspect the toolbar**

- Check the working conditions of chains, tensioners, cables, wiring, and idler pulleys.
- Inspect hydraulic hoses for leaks.
- Replace any hoses that cannot be fixed.
- Wheels/tires
  - Inspect tires for wear or cracks.
  - Check air pressure in tires.
  - Inspect bearings.
  - Inspect depth control arms.

**Inspect your row units**

- **Meters**
  - Metering units must work well to prevent “frequent skips, doubles, and triples.”
  - Calibrate meters
    - Calibrated meters can add six more bushels per acre.
  - Inspect parts for signs of wear, and replace if necessary.
- **Unit mount, frame mount, and fertilizer coulters**
  - Check diameter of coulters and replace if excessively worn.

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*Levelness of the planter is crucial to ensure all other adjustments.*

- **Rubber seals**
  - Replace all worn seals.
- **Parallel linkage arms**
  - Replace any worn parts, as they could cause the planter to operate unbalanced.
- **Row cleaners**
  - Check row cleaners for wear.

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*Staying up to date with repairs and inspections may prevent bigger problems in the future.*

- **Seed opener discs**
  - Worn, cracked, or warped blades will affect seed placement.
  - Replace blades less than 14.5” in diameter.
  - Shim blades properly to allow 1.5” of contact.
- **Seed tubes**
  - Inspect the seed tube guard for wear.
  - Inspect the tubes themselves for holes, splits, cracks, and end wear.
- **Seed firmers**
  - Check for wear—may need replacement.
- **Seed boxes**
  - Inspect seed boxes for holes, cracks, and cleanliness.
  - Check seed box alignment.
  - Improper seed box alignment could cause the meter to drop seed into the seed tube.

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**Jim Lascelles of Yetter Manufacturing’s Service Department recommends the following for row cleaner maintenance:**

- check bearings
- check pivot bushings (floating models only)
- check hardware for tightness
• Closing wheels
  ▫ Check closing wheel alignment.
    • Use the Yetter Checker to ensure proper alignment of closing wheels.
    • If no row checker is available, you may set your planter on concrete, then pull ahead about five feet. Look at the mark left behind the planter by the double disk openers. The mark should run right down the centerline between the closing wheels. If a closing wheel is running too close to the mark, adjust the closing wheels to bring it back to center.
  ▫ If closing wheel arms have too much play, the bushings, or possibly the entire arm, may need to be replaced.

• Bushings
  ▫ “Worn bushings increase row bounce which increases seed bounce. Stand behind the row unit and wiggle it up and down and back and forth checking to make sure bushings are tight.”

• Drive system
  ▫ “Check every chain. Kinked chains cause shock and vibration in the meter.” Also check drive cables where chains are not used.

Perform an in-field test
Check the planter operating height and make sure the planter is level. Then check the frame height as well based on the operating manual specifications. Make a test pass in a dry portion of your field. At 100-foot intervals, plant 25-foot strips on flat land using your typical planter speed. Take three samples from your test pass while measuring to test the depth and spacing of each seed. Be sure to look for doubles or misses. If you notice a constant problem after checking your test samples, recheck your planter. While testing in the fields, also test your wheel down-pressure and seed trench closing.

Planter maintenance is crucial
Maintaining your planter is one of the most essential processes to ensure higher yields and uniform seed placement. Seed placement and seeding rate cannot be changed after the seedlings come up, so it is critical that your planter be in its best shape before planting.

Endnotes
iii Ibid.
iv Duiker.
v “Planter Tune-up Tips.”
vi Ibid.