

THE

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Agronomics with livestock in mind!



PLANTING FOR MAXIMUM YIELD...

A key factor impacting yield potential of a corn crop is the planting date. Plant too late... and the shortened growing season limits the crop's ability to produce to its fullest potential. Plant too early... and the seed is vulnerable to harsh early spring conditions that can cause uneven emergence and reduce stand yield. Among the challenges producers face when planting and growing corn is hitting that window between planting too early and planting too late. Additionally, many producers find it difficult to plant all their acres in a reasonably short period of time. Weather also plays into this scenario ~ often not cooperating and causing even the best managers to miss the ideal, opportune time completely.

GETTING CORN PLANTED ON TIME ~ In order to maximize yield, it is important that corn is planted prior to the end of the optimum planting time for each climatic zone. The optimum planting period for any area is the range of dates that provides the best combination of soil and air temperature and moisture, along with the quality of seed to be planted and its average days to maturity (RM). The optimum planting range for corn is approximately two to three weeks. Planting after this optimum time will usually result in lower yields. Yields begin to



decline even at this time, with many studies showing a rate of approximately ½ percent loss in yield potential per day following a delay in planting. The longer the delay in planting the greater the decline in possible yield rates and in the speed of decline. This decline [in yield due to delayed planting] is due to many things, including a shorter growing season (by default), insect and disease pressure, and heat and/or moisture stress during pollination. Many producers, aware of the problems that accompany delayed planting have opted for early planting, figuring that the gains outweigh the losses.

ACHIEVING UNIFORM STAND ESTABLISHMENT ~

Good, healthy stands are dependent on seed survival, uniform plant spacing and seed size. While delayed planting creates numerous challenges, stand uniformity and plant health can often be sacrificed with planting too early. Often, if seeds survive cold conditions, seedlings suffer cold-related injury and can be stunted. Corn seed struggles to germinate at temperatures below 50°F. With temperatures well below this level (at times of early planting) the seed can be killed by either cold or soil fungi, even when the seeds have been treated with a fungicide. Many fungicides fail under extended cold and wet

conditions. Furthermore, cold and damp conditions impact stand health and yields end up well below an optimum level. In order to compensate for this possible shortfall, many producers increase the planting rate. This adds to the gamble of early planting, because seed survival [under these conditions] can be unpredictable.



PLANT SPACING ~ When planting corn, even spacing is known to improve yield potential. In a 1997 study (Nielson), yield increases were noted when within-row spacing was uniform. When spacing is too close, plants compete for sunlight, water and nutrients. Crowding often results in barren plants or ears too small to be harvested. When corn is subjected to overly dense planting, you will often notice that corn plants next to a gap in the row compensate to some extent by producing larger ears, but rarely does this replace lost production from missing plants. Spacing requirements may vary from hybrid to hybrid in order to achieve maximum yield potentials. Check out spacing recommendations prior to planting to ensure a better return on your investment.

PLANTING FACTORS ~ Many things must be considered when determining an *ideal* planting time. Again, this will vary from location to location. It is important to obtain as much information as possible when making a decision about planting in your area. This information is available from local extension offices, universities in your state that have agriculture and agronomy programs, or from your state and federal Departments of Agriculture. Having this [information] available when you visit producers can better assist them in deciding when to plant. Plant for quality results... it pays!
(edited from an article by LANDEC AG)

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