

FORAGER



Agronomics with livestock in mind!



Tillage and Planting Options for Corn

In most areas corn planting has started, and in some areas it is already complete. This time of year it seems conversations about tillage and planting practices are about the most popular things going. Attend an auction or stop by the hardware store and you are sure to hear buzz words like no-till, zone till and others. It seems like there are as many tillage and planting programs as there are agronomists. While there are a million philosophies on these topics it seems like the same reoccurring myths crop up every spring, although it is hard to find an agronomist that agrees with them. A few of these myths are identified below.

Myth #1

_____ is the best tillage and planting program for corn.

- Fill in the blank with conventional tillage, zone tilling, no-till, etc. Realistically, in every area there are a number of options that will produce good crops. The planting style that offers the highest yield often depends on the weather, soil type, planting date, and fertility of the given field. To say one planting style is always best can cause problems under certain circumstances. Understanding the options available to a farm minimizes yield losses from a planting approach not matched to the conditions.

Myth #2

You should be planting at least 32,000 to 34,000 seeds per acre to obtain the highest yielding corn silage.

- All corn hybrids have a recommended planting population for optimum feed quality and tonnage. Adhering to these guidelines helps ensure the most profitable corn crop is produced. Planting flex ear hybrids at high populations can result in high yields of fodder with no grain. Seed companies spend a lot of time and money to determine the populations at which each hybrid performs best.

Myth #3

Starter fertilizer does not have any benefit and is not needed.

- Research has shown that in most conditions starter fertilizer provides an economic benefit. The only

time planting without starter is not detrimental is when the field is planted late and the soil is warm and has a very high phosphorus level. However, in virtually every other situation using starter fertilizer is beneficial.

These are just a few issues that have come up this spring. Understanding that several options exist for planting corn will enable growers to select the one that best fits their situation.

IN THE FIELD – Weevils may hit second crop

With the slow start to spring this year it appears alfalfa weevils (pictured below) are getting a later start as well. Peak injury is most frequently seen in mid-to-late May, but will probably appear later in many areas this year due to different weather conditions. Farmers should begin monitoring stands and spray when 40% of plant tips show signs of damage. Feeding by weevils skeletonizes alfalfa leaves. Harvesting often kills a significant number of weevils. As a result, weevils are usually not a concern in second crop. However, this year they may be a concern for second cutting. Check stubble closely following cutting to ensure weevils are not consuming crown buds and preventing regrowth. Local agronomists can help if weevils become a problem in your area.



Last Chance to Plan for Forage Needs

This month is extremely busy with planting and harvest, but if producers have not already done so, it is the last chance to evaluate forage inventories and determine if adjustments to forage plans are needed. Corn and sorghum sudangrass can be planted after first cutting to boost raw forage yields, if it is needed. Evaluations now can help determine what changes can be made to avoid bare bunks or empty silos.