

“The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all. It is the healer and restorer and resurrector, by which disease passes into health, age into youth, death into life. Without proper care for it we can have no community, because without proper care for it we can have no life.” – Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*



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Are You and Your Corn Planter Ready for Great Yields?

By Dave Shearing, from various sources

Although there is still snow in the air as this article is written, we know that spring will arrive soon. With warmer weather comes farmers anxious to jumpstart the growing season. Although you may think that you are more-than-ready to start planting, it is important to be sure that your equipment is also. Corn planters operated out of adjustment and at too high a speed can lower yields up to 20 bushels of grain or 4 tons of silage per acre. Tire pressure also has a profound effect. Why does this happen?

Uniform seed placement and correct depth are very important. Poor seed depth and spacing will reduce yields and waste great genetics, good soil fertility and effective herbicides. Doubles or triples cause competition for sunlight, nutrition and water. Crowding results in barren plants or runty ears. This lowers grain yields and corn silage quality and yields.

A planter set to drop 30,000 seeds per acre can easily do it and still do a lousy job. If 5,000 seeds are in the form of doubles and triples or come up more than 48 hours after the majority because of poor depth control, they are essentially weeds!

Take these steps in your shop to ready your planter for picket fence stands:

1. Get out the operator's manual and find the correct tire pressure for your planter.
2. Finger pickup and vacuum units spit out seed as fast as a submachine gun spits out bullets. Minor wear can make them perform imperfectly. Your operator's manual tells how to care for these planter components.
3. Backer plates, brushes, springs, fingers and belts all need checking every year. To save time checking parts, take them to your dealer. There are also some very good independent companies that do a great job of maintenance on planter components at a reasonable price. CaseIH planters have wear grooves in their seed disc; if

they are gone, replace them. If the singulater springs have lost their springiness, change the group of springs. Seed brushes should be replaced if they are worn badly or they will not perform.

4. Disc openers should be at least 14½ inches in diameter. (CASE IH openers are slightly larger, but they should not wear more than 1/2 inch.) When sliding business cards in at the 4 o'clock position, they should touch at least 1½-2 ½ inches apart. Make the adjustment on the arm. THIS WILL PREVENT a W shaped seed furrow. In CaseIH planters, check the firming point. Do not hesitate to replace it. This insures a good seed furrow.
5. Gauge wheels need to be adjusted so that they slightly rub the disc openers. Ragged seed walls cause uneven seed depth resulting in uneven emergence.
6. Check the seed tube, as well as mud scrapers, for wear.
7. Shake the entire seed unit to see the amount of wear on the bushings. Worn bushings will cause emergence problems because of an inability to keep the unit level. This causes jerking in the drive, which results in uneven seed drop.
8. Closing wheels, no matter what type, should be centered on the seed trench. Ensure that closing wheels have good bearings, are unbent, and apply even pressure. If you have spiked closing wheels, the tips should be no closer than 2 3/8 – 2 ½ inches apart. They should not penetrate the soil beyond the U. The closing wheels have the beveled side in and the flat side out. These 13-inch wheels were originally residue trash wheels designed to go in front of the planter. Therefore, you put the one marked L on the right side and the one marked R on the left side. If you have one spiked wheel, it will be a 15-inch wheel, and the rubber or cast wheel should be 1 7/8 inches from the spiked wheel.
9. There are many closing wheel variations on the market, and, if installed according to directions, they do the job well. Some work better in particular situations.

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9. Check that chains and drivers are taut and running smoothly.
10. Down pressure springs should be sound. Have spares available.
11. Measure the distances between units. They should be 30 inches. If they are not, they have slid or are twisted. This can cause havoc in a lot of areas such as depth, singulation, row width, and chain lineup.

The following practices in the field will help ensure picket fence stands:

1. Make sure the planter frame is level when it is in the ground. Non-level planters can lead to several unexpected problems:
 - The fertilizer coulters may be so close to the soil that they catch and pile residue.
 - Rigid residue managers may dig trenches or canals that force the depth gauge wheels to ride high and put the seed in shallow.
 - The rear closing wheels are high and just don't close the seed slot, hindering emergence. Many times this occurs when the hitch is too low or the tractor tires have worn down from last year. Sometimes mellowness of the field will affect this.
2. Parallel arms should be close to level when the planter is in the ground to achieve maximum benefit from down-pressure springs. Check bushings on arms and replace if they are sloppy.
3. Maintain frame height between 20 and 22 inches above the ground.
4. If the frame and units are not level, it is better to have them a little higher in front rather than a little lower.

Never the opposite! If the units are low in front, the rear packer wheels may not perform well and emergence will be hindered.

5. A no-till coulters or center zone-till coulters should be one-half inch shallower than planting depth. Some farmers have taken the no-till coulters off and feel they get better stands because of less bounce.
6. To prevent fertilizer burn, the fertilizer coulters should be around 4 inches deep and at least 2 inches away from the seed trench. Check this often! Every year a few people have one get bent or slide over and burn one row in a field or two. This makes for a very unhappy farmer. (Note: There are exceptions to this rule. If the total of N and K is more than 90# /acre, the fertilizer should be moved further from the seed furrow.)

If you have been diligent in completing the checklist, you are ready to start planting. Now we just have to wait for the weather to cooperate as well.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Western New York Crop Management, a local agricultural consulting firm, is seeking to fill a Paid Agricultural Summer Intern position in Ontario and Wayne Counties. We are seeking responsible individuals that have the capability to perform field crop inventory and assessment duties on cropland. Individual must be able to work independently and have dependable transportation. Employment duration is from mid-May to mid-August. If you are interested in becoming a part of our team please send a resume to:

*Western New York Crop Management Association,
5242 Curtis Rd
Warsaw, NY 14569*

or you may forward resume
via fax at (585)786-5829 or
e-mail to: office@wnycma.com

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Crop Damage from Wildlife By Greg Tessman

Each year, many of our producers experience serious crop losses from wildlife. Most of the losses are from heavy deer populations, as well as from beaver, geese and other common wildlife. Damage can be very costly to farmers and create problematic issues for the community. The New York State DEC is the main source to contact for wildlife control. The rules and regulations pertaining to nuisance control and harvest are available on their website (www.dec.ny.gov) located under NUISANCE SPECIES; Handling Problems with Wildlife. The information provided will give the landowner good guidance in dealing with their specific situation or problem.

The main issue for WNY is really deer damage and the negative results of cropland damage. The landowner may want to participate in the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP). This program is designed to manage deer in a small geographic area or on individual properties or cooperatives during the deer hunting seasons. Applications are available to landowners from the DEC offices and the takings are by licensed hunters only. The eligibility for the permits is based on management needs due to crop, forest or other vegetation damage. The number of DMAP tags issued is based on acres and damage. The tags are issued to the landowner who passes them to licensed hunters of their choosing. The landowners control who is on their property. There is a limit of 2 tags per hunter in most areas and there is no cost for this program. The deadline for application is September 1st of each year. The other NYSDEC program that is a viable option is the Deer Damage Permit (DDP). This program is designed for control while the damage is occurring. It is available throughout the state. The eligibility for permits is based on the property damage and the lack of or failure of other practical alternatives to alleviate the problem. These permits are generally not available during the open deer-hunting season and the takings are by the permitted individual and approved agents only. The permit is issued when the damage warrants it. The program is usually for deer without antlers and the tag numbers are for a limited quantity specified on the permit. The permit activity is limited to the lands specified on the permit and the permittee must report all deer taken to the DEC. Harassment techniques are also allowed and there is no charge for the program. Contact your local NYSDEC office for details on these programs or with other wildlife nuisance concerns as they arise.



We now have a FREE program for all members to access your recommendations and input farm records. See our website at

www.wnycma.com

to download the software. Then you will need to send an e-mail to

office@wnycma.com

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