

Production Blog



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Fellow Farmer's Observations

Last week BRT Ag and Turf came to plant a corn plot at the farm - it was a big plot covering between 30 and 35 acres using a conventional non-GM hybrid and a BRT fertilizer program. I whacked out the cover crop and winter annuals with Gramoxone and then sprayed on a generic atrazine and metalochlor residual.



Keith Schlapkohl and Dan Davidson discussion soil conditions (shot by Nick Scalise, DTN).

Kieth Schlapkohl from Stockton, Iowa accompanied the two BRT staffers to my farm to help set the planter for local soil conditions as well as keep the planter full of product.

Schlapkohl's has one of the most permeable and crumbly soils that I have ever seen. He markets and applies PowerLime in eastern Iowa which is a calcium based by-product containing both lime and gypsum. He has been applying PowerLime to his fields regularly for years and when you look at the profile the botton 5th and 6th foot are just as crumbly as the first foot.

Schlapkohl knows me and my farming exploits and diasters but doesn't know our eastern Nebraska soils. And I consider him an innovative and successful farmer in eastern Iowa. During the course of the day however he made some comments on my soil conditions.

I appreciated have Schlapkohl present because he is meticulous about planter settings and performance and he spent quite a bit of time tweaking the planter to get it to plant under local conditions.

Schlapkohl's comments to me included:

Soil surface is dry but get down 1 to 2 inches and it is muddy and sidewalls are being smeared

Appears to be some localized compaction issues

Soil must be low in available calcium since the furrow side walls don't crumble when running spade closing wheels

The planter is encountering root balls - vertical tillage doesn't throw out all the rootballs and hides those that remain anchored in the soil

Soil is clayey, tight and not porous enough

"It amazes me you plant up and down the hills and don't have waterways," said Schlapkohl.

Welcome to eastern Nebraska soils Mr. Schlapkohl. I long for the days when I could farm the rich, deep and relatively flat soils that he gets to farm.

Posted at 12:01PM CDT Jun 2, 2010 by Dan Davidson

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Why is it Dan, that you guys don't have terraces and waterways? I'm from NC Kansas and had family in Norfolk for the last 5 years and would travel up your way 2+ times a year. It also amazes me "that you plant up and down the hills and don't have waterways". I don't see how you don't have major major erosion issues. Even if the fields in question were 100% no-tilled for 25+ years I can't imagine you don't fight gullies and ditches all over. On top of that I see pivots crawling up slopes that our cows would have a hard time with! Maybe it's a completely different soil structure than here but still!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I'm either flabbergasted or jealous or both. Here, the fastest way through our fields is up and over terraces and that is hard on equip...especially corn head snouts! p.s. when I say "you" I mean farmers in that region of Nebraska.

Posted by Unknown at 01:11PM CDT Jun 2, 2010

Terraces dotted the landscape on our farm. My brother works for the NRCS and spent his career designing and installing terraces throughout the county. But along came no-till and then corn on corn and all of a sudden terraces designed for 4-row planters no longer made any sense and were inefficient and out came all the terraces. And generally speaking with no-till corn after corn and throwing in a rye cover crop on a third of the acres and erosion isn't an issue. However I must concede that when you get 2 inches of rain in 60 minutes (yesterday afternoon), no amount of conservation is going to hold back erosion. And by the way we had big push up terraces that you needed a rope to scale and not the smaller farming friendly terraces that dot the Kansas landscape.

Posted by Daniel Davidson at 01:45PM CDT Jun 2, 2010

dan, do you have any contact info for powerlime? i know calcium is king but on my farm, i think he is still a prince and i am working on it! dave wiebke

Posted by Unknown at 04:16PM CDT Jun 2, 2010