

Leading Edge

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No·till
On The Plains

Farm Smarter!

by Rod Peters

For those who have partaken of various no-till events in recent years, the name 'Doug Palen' may have some familiarity. Outgoing, and an outspoken advocate for no-till, many of you may have already been introduced. Behind the smiling face and joker personality, the keen mind of a businessman churns away.



Doug, the third of four siblings, and the one showing the most interest in farming, committed himself to that endeavor in 1993 when his father invited him to manage the cropping side of the livestock/crop operation in the rolling hills near Glen Elder,

KS. Doug had earned a bachelor's in agribusiness from Fort Hays State University, and worked for one summer as a crop scout for Servi-Tech in Nebraska, but this was a serious assignment! By '94, Doug had assumed the full workload and all the financial responsibility for the cropping enterprise of the farm—without much oversight by dad or other family members, it was 'sink or swim' for young Doug.

While Doug's professors at FHSU had casually introduced him to the concept of no-till, the summer spent scouting in Nebraska was a pivotal event for Doug—he saw firsthand that no-till was indeed possible. That experience also opened his mind to

a different level of management, and taught him that farming could be very profitable—it was just management. When he was plunged into operating the Palen farm, he immediately recognized the possibility of applying no-till's efficiencies. In the beginning stages, what intrigued Doug about no-till was how he could conserve the resources and his labor. Without hired help or family members, getting everything done in a tillage system would have had Doug in a pinch. So he decided to learn all he could about no-till. Doug's considering such a major break from the tradition of doing tillage is not so sur-



Photo by Doug Palen.

Palen's rig planting corn into two years' worth of wheat stubble—boatloads of stubble, in fact.

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