



NORTH PLATTE
Natural Resources District

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For the week of DEC. 16, 2007

No-Till Notes:

Residue Management 1

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Managing high amounts of residue in no till farming is a challenge to new no till producers. How do you get a crop established in all that "trash." Crop establishment is the biggest challenge when beginning no till farming.

Residue management always begins at harvest. How are you going to best distribute the residue being taken in by the combine evenly across the width of the combine head? Chaff spreaders are a must when harvesting and planting into the field in no till. Large amounts of chaff left directly behind the combine will greatly hinder crop establishment when planting back into the field. Equipment manufactures are improving on the distribution of the residue behind the combine. It is very important that this residue be spread as evenly as possible.

On our farm we have switched to a stripper header to harvest our wheat, millet, and edible beans. We also plan to use the stripper header as we begin exploring the possibility of raising field peas in our cropping rotations. The stripper headers were originally designed to harvest field peas in England. It doesn't seem like to much of a stretch to use them in edible beans and they have proven themselves in small grains such as wheat, millet, and to a large extent in the rice producing regions.

We like the stripper header in our operation because it leaves the residue standing. If you use a conventional head to combine wheat the combine must spread this residue evenly across the width of the head in order to make planting easier. Assuming the combine does a good job of distributing this residue, the residue is still on the soil surface and the drill or planter must be able to handle the residue and cut through it. With the stripper header the residue is left standing so the soil surface has only the chaff on it. As long as the chaff spreaders are doing their job, there is little residue on the soil surface for the planter or drill to contend with.

Another advantage to using the stripper header and leaving the stubble standing is catching snow during the winter months. It doesn't seem to snow near as much as it used to, but any moisture you can trap during the winter is valuable in the next growing

season. A disadvantage may be a heavy, wet, spring snow which may lay the standing residue over and make planting difficult in the spring. Another disadvantage is a big wind after planting in the spring which may move the residue around once the field has been planted and some of the residue has been detached from the soil.

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