

He Seeds Cover Crops While He Combines

Cover crops save the soil, crowd out winter weeds, and feed and protect the coming crop, says dedicated conservationist and no-tiller Ray McCormick. With his combine header-mounted, Gandy Orbit-Air applicator, he has eliminated the need to make a second trip to plant the cover crop.

"In the past we seeded winter peas with an 1890 Deere CCS air drill in a separate pass," says McCormick. "Last year we didn't get the Gandy unit put together until the third week of October, so we had fields seeded both ways. We got as good a stand with the Gandy as with the air drill. We will probably do 75 to 80 percent air seeding with the header this coming year."

McCormick had done plots using a hand seeder ahead of the straw spreader. They convinced him air seeding would work. However, the seed had to be placed under the residue for good emergence. That meant hanging it on the combine, and the only available place was on the header.

Mounting it was relatively simple. McCormick made a support frame on the backside of the rail header rail using 1 1/2-in. steel tubing. A piece of U-channel iron welded to the Gandy frame let him attach it to the rail with set screws.

"We ran the hoses behind the header and underneath the corn head's snapping rollers," says McCormick. "I tied the Gandy unit into excess ports on the quick connect unit for electric and hydraulic connections. When I pull the lever to disconnect the header, I disconnect the Gandy as well."

This year McCormick will be trying out a prototype low profile Gandy applicator. It will allow him to mount it to the grain platform and reverse the hoses to come out the back. It will also make it possible to open the top without interference from the grain reel.

McCormick notes that even if there was room for the Gandy unit to be mounted to the combine, it would require disconnecting up to 12 hoses from the header each time the header was changed.

The Gandy could be switched to another header simply by removing the set screws. However, McCormick figures his cost savings and the benefits of cover crops will more than justify a second Gandy unit.

"It will pay for itself in a year in time and energy," says McCormick.

He notes that using the Gandy does mean he has to use small seeded cover crops. Last year he seeded only annual rye with the Gandy. This coming year, he will plant annual rye, crimson clover and oilseed radishes on fields going into corn. Annual ryegrass and rapeseed will be seeded to corn fields going into soybeans in 2013. Plus, with the

small seeds, he gets a lot more acres per hopper fill.

Large seeded or small, McCormick knows what a cover crop is worth. "Our state agronomist estimated cover crops saved about 50 bu. per acre during our drought and extreme heat," he says. "With our peas and grass cover crop this year, we made nitrogen at the rate of about a pound a day."

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Baler pickup with bent, rusted steel bands.



Pickup fitted with new Tobin poly bands.



In addition to longer wear, hay feeds more smoothly after bands are installed, says manufacturer George Zimmerman.

Poly Pickup Bands Boost Baler Performance

After a custom baler complained to George Zimmerman about rocks and other objects continually bending the metal pickup bands on his big square baler, George and his wife, Faith, developed their new heavy-duty poly pickup bands.

The Zimmermans had been manufacturing traffic cones and other safety products out of various plastics since 2005. The poly pickup bands are their first ag product. The bands are catching on fast with farm equipment dealers across the country who have been signing up to handle them.

"Our goal in developing these was to eliminate the problem of bending and wearing. These bands are made heavy and will withstand impacts without damage. If pickup teeth do rub against the bands, they will not wear through nearly as quickly as steel bands. In addition, hay feeds through

much more smoothly and easily," says Zimmerman.

The 1/2-in. thick bands have a 1/4-in. support ring on the inside to strengthen and maintain shape. Longer bolts (included) are required to attach the poly bands. Zimmerman notes that you can replace them one or two at a time as steel bands wear, or do them all at once.

They fit most models of Case IH, New Holland, and Hesston big square balers. They are now available to fit Deere round balers.

Check out a video of the poly bands being installed at www.farmshow.com.

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