

Planter Attachment Advice From Veteran No-Tiller

Illinois farmer Terry Schneider has been 100 percent no-till farming for 11 years on his 2,200 acre corn and bean farm near Shirley. He recently visited with Dave Ernst, managing editor of "No-Till Farmer" about new planter attachments.

He says one of the most common mistakes new no-tillers make is using too much equipment, especially when planting corn into soybean stubble. "There's usually no need for residue removers when planting corn into soybeans," says Schneider, adding that an 8 to 13-wave no-till coupler is all that's needed under most conditions. But he notes that there's no one coupler that works the same under all conditions.

Last year, Schneider ran his planter with 8, 12, 13 and 24-wave couplers. Each coupler type performed better than the others in different parts of the field. He has also looked at Yetter's new 25-wave coupler. He feels it has possibilities but thinks it's too thin - at 3/4 in. wide - because it doesn't fracture much soil outside of the 3/4-in. track.

The only coupler Schneider doesn't recommend under any conditions as a single no-till coupler is the bubble type. "If you're going to use a bubble coupler all by itself, you're better off not using anything at all," he says. "It's an excellent coupler for mini-

mum tillage because it's designed to firm soil that's been worked up. For that reason, it also works in front of the double disk opener as part of a 3-coupler zone-till attachment similar to Ray Rawson's. But forget it as an opening coupler."

In most soils, Schneider says no-till couplers should run 1/4 to 3/8-in. shallower than planting depth. That prevents air pockets from forming in the seed zone. He adds that no matter what kind of couplers or other attachments you have on the planter, it's critical that the planter be set uniformly parallel with the ground. If it's running on its nose or heel, proper adjustment of planter attachments is difficult.

No-tilling into comstalks is a different ball game. Schneider has some ground that's been in continuous corn for 17 years. Every year he moves over half a row and plants between the old rows. He runs starter fertilizer couplers on either side of the row about 5 in. apart followed by a row-clearing trash cleaner and coupler combination. He says you should only try to clear away residue, not work up the soil.

"Some literature may tell you running couplers 3 to 4 in. deep creates a nice seedbed, but it also creates a nice irrigation canal," he notes. (No-Till Farmer)

Grower Uses Hay For Bedding, Then Feeds It To Cows

Using hay to bed horses and then feeding it to beef cows has eliminated the need for straw on one Kentucky horse farm. The operator says cows gobble up the soiled hay like candy.

Steve Johnson of Midway, Kent., started looking for a way to cut costs and hit on the hay bedding idea as a way to eliminate the expense of buying straw and the work of getting rid of it.

Hay unsuitable for horses because of rain damage becomes horse bedding and cow feed. Mature grass hay cut from horse

pastures also gets used for bedding and feed. Previously, he clipped pastures up to 15 times a year. Now he lets it grow taller, then cuts and bales it.

"To me a bale of straw is the most useless thing in the horse industry," says Johnson. "We pay virtually the same price for it as we do hay."

Hay bedding is now the primary feed given to wintering beef cows. "Third-rate hay is worth almost as much to me as first-rate hay." (Hay & Forage Grower)

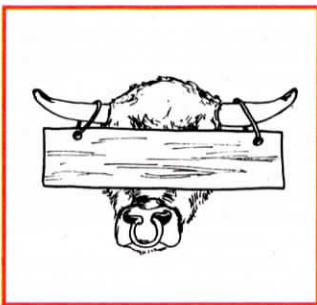
Simple Way To Tame Bulls

You can keep rambunctious bulls from jumping fences, fighting with other bulls, or attacking people with a simple method used by Saskatchewan farmer Richard Zarembo.

"It's an old Indian trick from way back," says Zarembo about his idea of hanging a small board across the front of his bulls' heads. If the bulls have horns, you just hang the board from them. If not, you can fit their head with a harness.

Zarembo just uses a piece of plywood that extends about 4 in. on each side and about 4 in. below the bull's eye level. The animal can still see out to either side and, by turning his head, can see forward. But blocking their straight-ahead view calms them down.

"This does not stop them from feeding, drinking or doing what bulls are supposed to do," he notes, adding that the idea works on other animals, too - horses, rams, billy



goats, etc.

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Goats Suckle Dairy Calves

Mississippi farmer Tom Miller, of Macon, made this mini "nursing parlor" so his dairy goats could suckle dairy calves.

A small plywood bench sits on the barn floor between lengths of wire fence panel. A 6-in. sq. hole is cut into the wire panels on each side of the goat. The goat hops up onto the bench, and two calves - one on each side - stick their heads through the holes to suckle.

The solid sides and 6-in. sq. opening are key to its success. "The hole needs to be exactly 6 in., not 1 in. bigger or smaller in order to keep the calf from butting the goat while suckling," says Miller, who tried three previous designs.

The goats suckle the calves twice a day until the calves are up to 1 1/2 lbs. of grain consumption per day.

Miller says he originally tried to grow baby calves on commercial milk replacer but he says using goats is much cheaper and calves' health is better. "I'm converting cheap grass into milk and a dairy goat does that much more efficiently than a dairy cow."

As the calves grow larger, it often takes two goats to satisfy them. "A good dairy goat theoretically should produce two gallons of milk a day and should be able to suckle two calves, but I've discovered there's a definite shortage of good dairy goats," he says.

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Human Hair Scares "Pests" From Crops

German farmer Joachim Bayer keeps rabbits and other pest animals out of crops by spreading human hair around the perimeter of his farm fields.

Bayer says local barbers are only too happy to get rid of their piles of clippings. He regularly picks them up by the bagful in town and then lays down a thin trail of hair around fields. It remains effective for about 3 weeks or until a heavy rain.

It's particularly critical for Bayer to keep pests out of his crops because he's a plant breeder developing new varieties. Rabbits are his biggest problem but human hair has provided near perfect control. The best part about it, he says, is that it's not harmful to other animals or children, and it disintegrates naturally into the soil after a few months. (Farm & Country)

Electric Charge On Tillage Tools Cuts Pulling Resistance

Instead of buying a larger tractor to pull ever-bigger cultivators and chisels through the field, you can give the shanks an electrical charge to lower pulling resistance and then use a smaller tractor, says University of Arizona ag engineer Dennis Larson.

He's been able to reduce draft by up to 39 percent by applying 40 volts to tillage shanks. The idea works best in moist, loam soil.

Applying a small electrical current to the surface of tool shanks reduces drag because the charge pulls soil moisture across the tool. The film of water lubricates the metal and allows it to slice more freely through the soil.

So far the idea hasn't been tested in the field. Larson rigged up a bin and dragged a specially mounted cultivator shovel through it. Two coulters mounted behind the shovel

acted as a ground. Both were mounted on an insulated bar.

Using 40 volts in a loam soil with 17 percent moisture content reduced draft by up to 39 percent and cut tillage energy costs by 30 percent. That was at speeds of 5 mph. When clay was added to the soil, draft reductions went down. In soils without much moisture, draft reduction was only 11.6 percent.

"The reduction of tillage forces is really dramatic in the right soil and moisture conditions. We tended to see more reduction as we progressed from drier to wetter soil conditions. What we don't know is how fast the water moves and will it keep up with the implement at higher speeds." (Grainews)