

# PERSPECTIVES

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF CROP QUEST AGRONOMIC SERVICES, INC.

## Oklahoma Farmer Relies on Row-Tillage to Decrease Labor and Increase Yields

Veteran Crop Quest agronomist Farrell Allison, Greensburg, Kan., preaches the benefits of strip-tillage (or row-tillage) to anyone that will listen. In 28 years of crop consulting, he has seen the practice work year after year under all kinds of conditions and with all kinds of crops.

“Using strip-till improves the soil, decreases soil erosion, increases soil moisture, decreases compaction and saves trips over the field,” outlines Allison. “But where it really shows up in the grower’s bottom line is greatly reduced diesel costs, reduced labor and reduced wear and tear on machinery. I have one producer that was putting 2,500 to 3,000 hours on a tractor. He cut it down to 500 hours with row-till. I even have growers who are getting rid of their big four-wheel drive tractors and using front-wheel assist tractors, because they’re not doing that heavy tillage any longer.”

One such grower is Dean Reimer, who farms several circles near Ringwood, Okla., about 25 miles west of Enid. A few years ago, Reimer decided row-tillage was the answer to a problem he faced every year – being able to properly

prepare a seedbed following winter rye.

“We like to winter graze cattle on rye,” explains Reimer. “As soon as our corn is harvested, we come right in and plant rye. We disk the corn ground once and have to harrow it a few times prior to drilling the rye. Where we ran into a tillage problem,” he notes, “was in the spring when we had to fight our way through the bulky root system that’s produced by the rye as well as the excess compaction caused by the cattle grazing the fields. In our sandy soil, we would have to disk the rye field a couple of times and then harrow it a few times. By the time we had a decent seedbed, we had a lot of time, labor and diesel fuel tied up in the circle, not to mention the wind erosion problems we’d have after preparing the ground.”

Reimer, along with his father and two brothers who also own several circles and share equipment and labor, decided to go to a row-till system. They’ve never looked back.

“We’re excited about row-till,” the Oklahoma farmer notes. “With row-till, we spray Roundup® on one day and the next day we’re planting. It’s a one-pass

operation that is saving us thousands of dollars in diesel fuel and labor.”

Reimer points to excessive labor as the biggest cost savings they’ve seen since turning to row-tillage. “When we were using conventional tillage practices, we were spending four days on a circle to get it ready to plant – and that didn’t include our planting operation. Now we take the cattle off, spray our Roundup, wait a day and then we’re planting. To us, the time element is as much a savings as anything. We’re eliminating at least three to four tillage operations since turning to row-tillage.”

Reimer also notes that, since switching to row-tillage, they have increased yields by at least 15 to 20 bushels per acre. “We start off with a much better seedbed than we did with conventional tillage,” Reimer notes. “Disking wouldn’t let us get too deep. But with this ripper shank we’re using in the row-till system, we’re able to get down at least 12 inches to loosen our seedbed.”

Reimer outlines their row-till setup: “We have a coulter in the front that will knife through most anything and then

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# REAL AG DATA ... Real Time Results

Crop Quest Agronomic Services offers a service that combines the advantages of the company's 75 regional agronomists, as well as its Precision Ag specialists. REAL AG DATA provides producers across the High Plains region with weekly maps, charts and reports showing crop conditions, fertility levels and infestation trends. Just a few of the benefits producers can receive by subscribing to REAL AG DATA Services include:

- **Examining geographic and temporal pest trends**
- **Marketing potential (crop condition)**
- **Assessing trends even while away from farm (especially beneficial to absentee landowners)**
- **Accessing both broad-range and narrow-scope information**

REAL AG DATA is a visualization of the Crop Quest agronomic network in action. Daily experiences are pooled from each

agronomist – each of whom is skilled in identifying, quantifying and remediating the cropping troubles of a particular area. The individual, weekly reports make up the composition of REAL AG DATA. As implied in the name, the data is very real. At a glance, producers can confidently determine the specific events that have been occurring over hundreds of thousands of acres. What once would have taken countless hours to compile can now be accomplished on a weekly basis, providing a timely and accurate synopsis of crop events.

The benefits of the service are just as real as the name implies. Producers can use the timely information obtained from REAL AG DATA to help make accurate decisions. Even those not directly involved in farming can use this data to keep an eye on the cropping trends of the entire region.

For more information about REAL AG DATA, or to subscribe to the service, visit [www.realagdata.com](http://www.realagdata.com) or call (620) 225-2233.

## REAL AG DATA Now Available Via Internet

We are pleased to announce that access to Crop Quest's REAL AG DATA services is now available online at [realagdata.com](http://realagdata.com).

This service provides up-to-date, Real-Time information pertaining to production agriculture, with an emphasis on pest movement (e.g., soybean rust infestation) across our trade area. You will also find detailed information pertaining to growth stages, crop condition and other agronomic information valuable to your operation.

Crop Quest has the ability to pool agronomic data from our territory and deliver that pooled information in a concise manner, updated on a weekly basis throughout the growing season. Historical information is also available on the Web site.

We urge our customers to visit this site, and sign up for this service. **The subscription is offered at no charge to our customers.** When you visit the site, click on the 'Subscribe' tab/link at the top of the page, and follow the instructions. If you are not a Crop Quest producer, you are welcome to subscribe for a fee.

Crop Quest is constantly trying to find ways to add value to our services, and we believe this will be a very valuable addition. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your Crop Quest representative.

### Oklahoma Farmer Relies *Continued from Page 1*

behind it is the ripper shank. Behind the shank are some wavy coulters to help firm the ground back up. Then we have the planter direct-coupled to the row till. On the front of the planter there's a trash whipper that disperses the excess trash evenly. We are also set up to apply liquid starter fertilizer at the same time we're preparing and planting the seed. We do the 2 X 2 placement – 2 inches beside the seed and 2 inches below."

Reimer also notes, "When fully hooked up, the unit looks fairly scary, but it handles easily and has been a fairly trouble-free operation. We've found out, especially running a vacuum planter, that this system

pulls hard, so it slows you down to about 4 to 5 mph. We also found out that you'll need lift-assist wheels on your planter for optimal success."

Reimer is getting ready to follow this year's rye with peanuts – a new crop

for him. "This row-till package should provide an excellent seedbed for peanuts. It should give the peanut plant plenty of room to grow and a great area to peg. We're excited to see how it goes," he concludes.

In conclusion, Allison notes, "Our role as consultants is to take the fear and guesswork out of changing from conventional tillage to strip-till. We discuss with our grower what he expects from the changeover, help him select the right equipment and train him on properly setting up the rig and maintaining it. If I was farming today, this is how I would be doing it. The benefits and costs savings are tremendous."



Roundup is a registered trademark of Monsanto Company, St. Louis, Mo.

# Soybean Crop at Risk



by **Ron O'Hanlon, President**  
Member, National Alliance of Independent  
Crop Consultants, CPCC-I Certified

The soybean crop this coming year may be at risk from several fronts. Jim Gleason wrote an excellent article in the January issue of the *Crop Quest Perspectives* newsletter about Asian Soybean Rust, which has been so devastating throughout South America for the past several years.


The hurricanes this past year are believed to have introduced the rust into the United States throughout all the southern Delta States. The rust has the ability to over-winter on the Kudzu plant as long as there is green leaf tissue on which it can thrive, and this plant is known to survive in the south. With the right weather conditions and wind currents, the Asian Rust has the ability to spread across all the soybean-growing regions through the central United States.



Another possible risk comes from the Chinese soybean aphid, which has been spreading throughout the soybean-growing regions. This insect, which is native to China and Japan, was accidentally introduced into the United States several years ago. It appears to occur at damaging levels on a two-year cycle. The aphid numbers were relatively low last year, but they were found throughout all of Kansas and the northern states. Only a few isolated areas reached treatment levels this past season.

Reports are coming from the northern soybean states that indicate over-wintering populations of the soybean aphid are at the highest level seen since the pest was introduced. The aphid can rapidly reproduce under the right climatic conditions by doubling in population every 1.7 to 2.7 days.

It will be important for soybean growers to have someone watching their crop and helping make decisions if one or both of these pests arrive on their farm. Timing of treatments is critical for effective control and prevention of serious yield loss.

Be sure to visit with your Crop Quest agronomists about their plans for protecting your soybean crop. 

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## Ron O'Hanlon Named Consultant of the Year

**Ron O'Hanlon, President of Crop Quest, Inc., was named Consultant of the Year at the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC) 2005 annual meeting at Universal City, Calif.**

The annual award is sponsored by BASF Chemical Company and the NAICC and is given to three individuals each year who are recognized by their peers for their work and activities as a professional consultant.



Bill Cox (left), President of the NAICC presents Ron O'Hanlon with the prestigious Consultant of the Year Award at the NAICC's annual meeting in Universal City, Calif.

**"I am honored to be selected by my peers for this prestigious award," says O'Hanlon, who has been a professional crop consultant for 26 years and a member of NAICC since 1992. "This award is shared by my entire staff at Crop Quest. Their dedication to quality and persistence in assisting our growers in reaching their production goals is recognized and appreciated."** 

# QA Hessian Fly Alert

by John Heimerman, Senior Agronomist

**Q** With the heavy fall infestations of the Hessian fly in localized areas of Kansas, what is the outlook for damaging infestations in the spring?

**A** There were select fields with heavy Hessian fly damage in the fall of 2004. Some of these fields are already damaged beyond recovery and have been grazed out or are being prepared for a spring crop to be planted. One possible problem with these fields is that if they are not being worked out, there is potential for heavy fly emergence in the spring. The spring winds can move the adults to neighboring fields of wheat.

If the weather is conducive to adult survival this spring, we could see heavy lodging, or white heads (sterile). The spring brood can begin in late March, where the eggs are deposited

on the leaf blades and the larvae hatch and move down the stem. Depending on the timing of the hatch, the larvae may attack below the soil surface up to just above any of the nodes. The damage on the wheat in the spring may not be noticeable at first, but could create lodging or head damage as the stem is weakened.

The potential is there for spring infestations and yield loss due to the Hessian fly. An ideal situation would be an early adult emergence and then a freeze to kill them off before they lay eggs. Due to the extended adult emergence period, this scenario would have to happen more than once in the spring to knock out a significant number of adults. If volunteer wheat is present in the area, it is possible for an additional brood in the summer. This may not affect the present growing crop, but can increase the numbers for fall infestation of the next crop. With the numbers of Hessian fly that are being seen at this time, producers will need to use management practices for the next wheat crop to protect themselves as much as possible. Observing the local fly-free date to drill wheat will be the best management practice since there are few resistant varieties for our area. The fly-free date is a date to follow, but it is best to make sure that you have had at least one low temperature of 27°F to knock out the adults before drilling.

## Two Crop Quest Consultants Honored With Trip

Eight crop consultants from throughout the United States, including Bret Koops, Leoti, Kan., and Dwight Koops, Ulysses, Kan., of Crop Quest, Inc., were selected as participants in the second annual FMC Consultant Crop Shop tour.

Bret and Dwight, along with six other crop consultants, spent five days traveling and meeting with other consultants, growers and agricultural experts in Mexico's diversified crop region along the Pacific coast.

Crop Shop was developed by FMC as a forum for information sharing among crop consultants. The tour, white papers, meeting participation and Web postings

are planned to help facilitate information exchange. To be eligible to participate in the program, crop consultants had to identify an agronomic problem that needed a creative solution and submit the case results with return-on-investment analysis for the grower.



Dwight Koops (left) and Bret Koops

“Both Bret and I were honored to be selected for this award and trip,” states Dwight Koops. “All of the Crop Quest agronomists face unique issues as they work with their growers and managers through the year. Bringing solutions to tough questions that result in an economic benefit is the exact reason Crop Quest was formed. Both Bret and myself enjoyed this unique exchange of information.”

### Mission Statement

Crop Quest is an employee-owned company dedicated to providing the highest quality agricultural services for each customer. The quest of our network of professionals is to practice integrity and innovation to ensure our services are economically and environmentally sound.

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