

Technotill has a good forage fit

Whether they are converting a sod-bound hay field to grain or establishing a new forage stand in stubble, prairie farmers say the Technotill Seeding System is an economical and effective way to direct seed.

DAVE WALKER, ROSETOWN, SASK.

Walker had excellent results using the Technotill Seeding System to establish a 150-acre alfalfa and brome grass forage stand in 2006. He had hoped to seed more in 2007, but the weather didn't co-operate.

Walker runs a 220 head commercial cow/calf beef herd, along with 2,400 acres of annually cropped land and 1,000 acres of seeded hay and pasture. The cattle also pasture over about 4,500 acres of native grass.

He had been using an air seeding system with shovel openers for years, but after several dry years he began looking for a low-disturbance seeding system with narrow openers.

"We used the Technotill system for the first time in 2006," says Walker. "It worked well on all crops, but I was particularly pleased on how it worked in establishing a new forage stand."

He used the system on a hilly field that has lighter soil unsuited to annual cropping.

The cereal stubble field was seeded to an alfalfa/brome mixture in late April, and as Walker was experimenting with seed drill adjustments, he realized some

of the openers were running as much as 3 ½ inches deep. He had the packer plate adjusted to pack ¼ inch or less soil over the seed row.

"Four days after seeding we had about ½ inch of rain and there were some fairly deep seed-row furrows in that field," he says. "That was the first time we have ever had such good, uniform emergence with a forage stand. We seeded into moisture and with good seed-to-soil contact, it came up just perfectly."

While the Technotill system is designed for side banding fertilizer, Walker used his single shoot air seeding system to place about 20 pounds per acre of 11-51 phosphorous directly with the seed. "That new stand was swathed in August of 2006 to control weeds and it looks like it will make an excellent hay crop in 2007."

Walker has used the Technotill system to seed durum, barley, oats and lentils on soils ranging from heavy clay to sandy soil, all with good results.

He advises using the system on an air seeder with 10 to 12 inch shank/row spacing. He used it on a seeder with eight-inch spacing and some soil was cast into the seed row furrow.

RANDY TOMAN, GUERNSEY, SASK.

The Toman family has used the Technotill Seeding System on their east central Saskatchewan farm for about five years.

They crop about 2,200 acres of grain and oilseeds, produce alfalfa for seed, raise leaf-cutter bees and also custom feed hogs, says Randy Toman, who operates Toman Adventures along with his brother, Rick, and father, Fred.

They use the Technotill openers on a 41-foot Morris Concept 2000 air seeding system. Before that they used a Flexicoil air seeder equipped with Stealth openers.

"In dry years we found it difficult to get good soil penetration and good packing with that system," says Toman. "So we were looking for a system that was low disturbance and provided good seed-row packing."

He was especially pleased with the emergence of the legume crop after using the Technotill.

The alfalfa is seeded on 30-inch centres with a cover crop of wheat, barley or an oilseed between the rows. In 2006, they seeded two rows of flax on 10-inch spacing between each seed-alfalfa row.

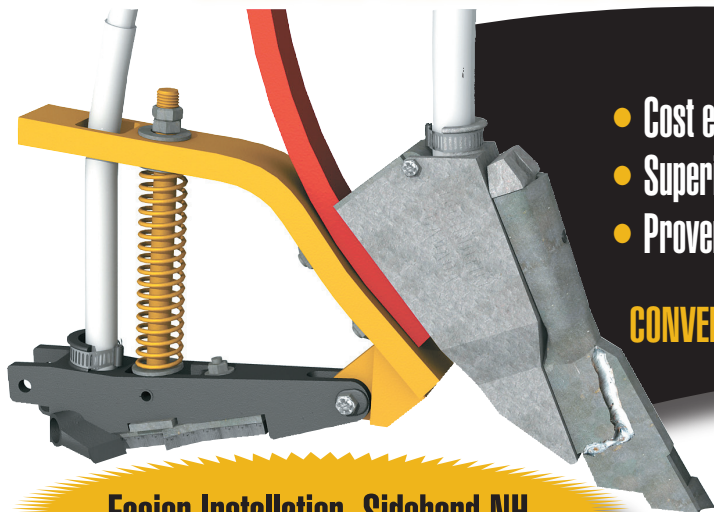
While the tip of the opener runs about one inch deep, they can adjust the packing depth on each shank. The packer plate is set to pack about ⅛ inch of soil on the alfalfa seed row and ⅜ inch of soil over the flax seed row.

Before seeding they usually broadcast a blend of potash, phosphate and sulfur, and at seeding time they use Technotill side banding to apply about 20 pounds of liquid phosphorous and five pounds of liquid potash. On the flax seed rows they also sideband granular nitrogen. "With the combination of seeding to moisture with a shallow soil pack over the seed, the alfalfa is up and into the cotyledon stage within three or four days," says Toman. "We're seeing nice, even germination."

In 2006 they also used the Technotill system as they rotated an older alfalfa stand back into cereal. The alfalfa, which was about knee high, was first sprayed with a blend of glyphosate and 2,4-D. Then the field was seeded to winter wheat. "The Technotill openers worked through all that crop material without a problem and by early summer of 2007, the winter wheat crop was looking great."

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