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Residue Management Hindered by Wet Weather

An uncharacteristically wet summer was followed by an historically wet fall across the Midwest; conditions that have grown progressively worse in the Eastern Corn Belt throughout the winter. For grain producers, this could add insult to injury as last season's residue remains.

Joe Dedman, a Kentucky-based CCA, said, "Last fall saw many producers having to pay to dry down their grain; high moisture grain comes from high moisture stalks." Dedman added, that inadequate dry-down coupled with excessive moisture since harvest is going to further slow the breakdown of residue. He says, "residue left in the field will have to dry down before it can decompose properly."

Corn residue is normally considered a positive element in the farm sector as remnants of the previous year's crop break down and provide nutrients for this season's plantings. Traditionally, farmers will apply nitrogen to help speed the breakdown of residues. Research, though, is beginning to question that practice, especially in cooler climates.

The breakdown of residue is carried out largely by soil-borne microbes. The activity level of these microbes is dictated, at least in part, by soil temperatures; when soil temperatures drop below 45 degrees they are almost totally dormant. Additional N will do nothing to spur activity of dormant microbes and, as such, will do little to speed incorporation of crop residue in time for spring according to Dan Kaiser, University of Minnesota extension soil and plant nutrient management specialist, in a recent article for Corn and Soybean Digest.

Additionally, nitrogen is a volatile nutrient. Applying N, either as anhydrous or urea, with poor incorporation techniques will result in losing most of your Nitrogen fertilizer through the formation of ammonia gasses.

Kaiser further emphasized, "Apply anhydrous ammonia to a depth of at least 4 inches. Incorporate urea as soon as possible after application – if no rainfall is expected- at a depth of at least 2 inches."

Producers can assist the breakdown of crop residue by applying 64 oz per acre of Monty's Liquid Carbon. Applications of Liquid Carbon can be tank-mixed with most burndown chemical. In addition to helping breakdown crop residue, Dedman says that Liquid Carbon can also help mitigate problems related to compaction. "I know that many corn and soybean growers were mudding out their corn last fall. The weight of that equipment on wet fields and the amount of snow we have seen this winter is going to make compaction a big problem for most farmers this season." Dedman says.

Whether its dealing with residue on the surface of your fields, or the impact of compaction beneath, applying Monty's Liquid Carbon at 64 ounces per acre, can help prepare your fields for the season ahead.



Last season's corn stalks are not breaking down due to cool, wet weather. Good residue management will be critical ahead of spring planting.

For more information call (800) 978-6342



