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Get your Farm Out of the Rut for a Successful 2010

Compaction a big problem after 9 months of unusually wet weather

According to the Palmer Drought Index and data from NOAA, drought conditions were virtually eliminated from the entire eastern 1/3rd of the country. In fact only 2 counties east of the Mississippi river indicated a moisture shortfall. Those statistics come as no surprise to farmers who had to mud out their crops last fall.

Working wet fields, though, can cause major problems for the upcoming season. The weight of heavy equipment filled with grain can quickly collapse the soil's structure. Additionally, the rainfall itself can cause its own compaction problems. An acre of water standing 1 inch deep across your field weighs 9.44 tons. Now, imagine the weight of the water in some low-lying areas where it tends to pond and stand for weeks at a time.

What you see as ruts and 'ponding' are actually forecasts of poor production this upcoming season. CCA Joe Dedman emphasized that "Roots cannot penetrate soils that are compacted tighter than 200 PSI." Without a good root mass the crops will not be able to access the nutrients that they need and will not be able to reach sub-soil moisture during the heat of summer.

Dedman recommends that producers try to get into their fields with a penetrometer ahead of planting if they have any questions. If there is obvious rutting in a field he says just assume you are going to have compaction problems. During planting, if the slits are not completely closing behind your planter, your fields are too wet and you crops will suffer all season from sidewall compaction, so "it's best to just leave and come back in a few days."

If your yield last season, your eye, or your penetrometer readings tell you that you have problems within the soil, you do have options. Some problems are severe enough that sub-soiling and ripping your field may be necessary. However, you should be aware that mechanical means of breaking up compacted soils present their own problems. Dan Marley, Midwest Territory Manager for Monty's says, "The weight of the equipment and the shearing action of the equipment creates its own hard-pan. It may move it lower in the soil profile, but it's still there."


Dedman recommends using Monty's Liquid Carbon at a rate of 64 ounces per acre. "It's best to put it down in the fall so it will have time to work through the soil during the winter. But at this point, anything will help; if you did not have the opportunity to apply it in the fall then you can tank mix it with your spring burn down applications."



Planting your crop when it is too wet will leave behind a slit that never closes leading to sidewall compaction, stunted growth, and nutrient deficiencies all season.

For more information call (800) 978-6342





Monty's Soil Conditioners will work to reduce compaction and improve nutrient efficiency throughout the season. According to Paul Hornback, a central Kentucky farmer, "After applying Monty's Soil Conditioner I was able to complete my spring field work and planting at about 2 gears higher than normal. I also noticed an improvement in the root systems of my crops." Another benefit of using Monty's Liquid Carbon this spring will be residue management as the product has a positive impact on the breakdown of crop residue.

If you are noticing signs of compaction in your field, applications of Monty's Liquid Carbon at a rate of 64 ounces per acre could help get you out of those ruts and into the fertile productive fields you need.