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Wet Fields Could Cause Problems for Nutrient Management this Spring

If a pound of N falls to the ground and no one incorporates it, did it really get applied?

Cool temperatures and a prolonged wet season are combining to hamper nutrient management this season.

The first problem growers will notice is more residue than normal on top of their soil. The wet conditions last fall prevented decomposition from starting as early as it normally does according to CCA Joe Dedman. Further, Dan Kaiser, Extension Soil and Plant Nutrient Specialist, University of Minnesota explains in a recent article for Corn and Soybean Digest that the cool soil conditions are keeping the microbial populations dormant and unable to perform their role in the breakdown of crop residue. Residue that is not broken down cannot begin releasing nutrients and will result in a reduction of naturally occurring nitrogen in your soil profile.

Additionally, the wet conditions could make applying N less efficient this season. Nitrogen, either as anhydrous or as urea, can change from a liquid to a gaseous state, especially in the presence of water. Once this happens, the gas can be quickly lost to the environment. In a wet field, Kaiser says that incorporating the N correctly is critical

- Apply anhydrous ammonia to a depth of at least 4 inches
- Incorporate urea to a depth of at least 2 inches, especially if no rainfall is expected
- Avoid applying urea directly to areas with heavy crop residue as the N could get tied up by the microbes as the crop is decomposing
- If your urea cannot be incorporated utilize a product designed to prolong the time between application and incorporation

This is another area where Monty's Liquid Carbon/Liquid Humic can be effective. Pete Karzynow, a Midwest custom applicator, has found that he has been able to prolong the time between application and incorporation and actually help stabilize the nitrogen and increase utilization by incorporating 64 ounces per acre of Liquid Carbon/Liquid Humic into his fertility applications. Says Karzynow, "I was skeptical at first but as I began to experiment with the product, I found that I was getting better usage from my applied N. Now, though, I won't let a truck leave the yard unless they have Monty's in the tank."




Farmers are using Monty's Liquid Carbon on fields like this Midwestern corn/soybean operation to boost nutrient efficiency.



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In addition to the gains in spring N efficiency, Karzynow also noticed improved field conditions overall by applying Monty's Liquid Carbon. Joe Dedman, CCA, says this spring that will be particularly important. Wet fields during harvest and spring field work have led to widespread compaction which will cause problems if not addressed this season.

Fertilizer prices have decreased over the past 12 months. However, they still represent a significant investment of your financial and time resources on the farm. Additionally, due to the nature of last season and 2009 harvest conditions, producers will face soil and crop challenges throughout 2010. Crop management decisions this season will require you to insure that you are getting the most from your crop residue, help reduce N volatility, and increase nutrient efficiency. Applying 64 ounces of Monty's Liquid Carbon per acre tank-mixed with your burn down chemicals and follow-up applications of Liquid Carbon, as needed, throughout this season could help reduce the impact of some of these shortfalls and help you manage your nutrients this season.