



Brad Plunkett, Maxwell

11.6 bu. advantage

I bought a ripper a few years ago and used it on one farm that had heavy soil and quite a bit of compaction at the time. I'm not farming that land now and I sold the ripper. It seemed to me that it was better at finding rocks than it was at improving yields. I've been participating in the On-Farm Network™ deep tillage trials for a couple of years now, using it on fields with heavier soils where we might expect to have a compaction problem. I expected to see a little benefit from ripping in the field where we had our 2004 strips, but in this case, the advantage was more than I expected.

Looking at the results from an economic point of view, though, with fuel costs in the \$2 per gallon range and corn prices at under \$2, it's going to take all the extra yield we produced on that field to pay for that one practice.

With this in mind, it's important that we look for a yield increase in subsequent crops, too. Any improvement in the second year after ripping would let you spread the cost out over two years, which might make it more economical to do.

Ken Caulkins, Maxwell

0.2 bu. increase

This was the second year I've had deep tillage strip trials with the On-Farm Network™. In both years, there was only a slight increase. In 2004, we had plenty of soil moisture and there wasn't the extreme heat we usually have in mid-summer.

I expected to see more of a difference, in favor of the ripped strips. I guess I don't have as much of a compaction problem as I thought I might have. I've been using a disk ripper on corn ground to work down the stalks before planting beans, and I'm using a tracked tractor for tillage and pulling the grain cart.

There is some Okoboji soil running through the field where my strips were in 2004. On that, the response was close to enough to pay for the ripping, but only about 5% of the field is that heavy soil.

I kept track of soybean yields last fall on the field I ripped two years ago to see if there was any carryover effect in the beans. There was no difference between the ripped and unripped strips, though. I went into this thinking there might be some benefit to in-line ripping ahead of the corn crop, but after two years of ripping trials, I'm not inclined to go buy an inline ripper.