sions about practices and products for crop production."

Lindsay's GPS user group was particularly interested in whether deep ripping would help in their area. "We'd read stories in farm magazines, and had seen advertising that suggested significant yield increases from ripping, so we set up trials here to see if it would work for us," he tells.

The On-Farm Network™ sponsored trials in several parts of the state. And while ripping did pay in some areas, Lindsay says he's glad he did the trials before he purchased a ripper. "We did replicated strip tests, ripping strips in fields that were being planted to corn, for three years before we gave it up. There were slight yield increases from ripping, but for the most part, the added cost and trouble of picking up the extra stones pulled up by the ripper knives outweighed any additional profits from increased yield," he says.

In addition to ripping and fall anhydrous studies, the Lindsays have looked at nitrogen compared with manure applied to supply the same amount of nitrogen, fungicides in corn and soybeans, and seed treatments.

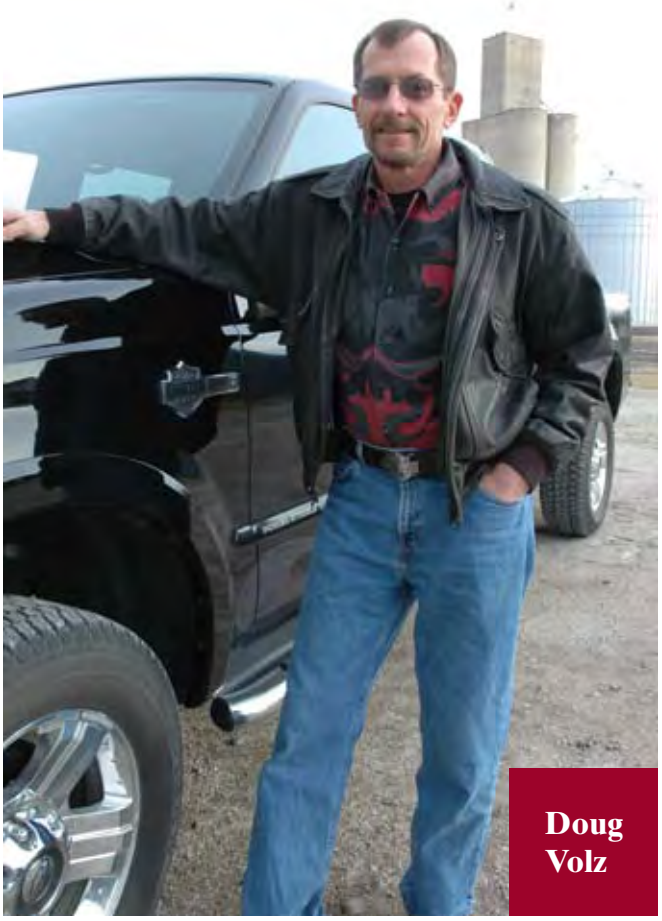
He says participating in the On-Farm Network has had a positive impact on his farm business. "We're continually learning how to adjust rates and practices, testing products before using them on a larger scale. And when we all share our information, we all benefit," he says.

He says he's been spared a lot of expense over the years by testing products that were being sold as ways to increase his profits. "Some of these have a very narrow use, so only help occasionally rather than every year. And some of the products we've tested just don't pay," he says.

While Lindsay insists that data generated by farmers doing on-farm studies belongs to the farmers who did the work, he also believes that compiling data from similar tests across the state can help other growers make better decisions. "Pooling of data is good because it helps farmers learn what practices are good and which ones are not. It lets us make better decisions that help us remain profitable, because without profit, we will not stay in business," he says. "It takes a lot of work to stay on top of all the changes that are taking place in agriculture. The On-Farm Network trials are helpful if you participate, but also, can be a source of information even if you don't."

He says another reason for pooling data is that it helps demonstrate what is happening to the environment. "None of us want to hurt the water we drink or the streams we fish in. So sharing the information with regulators makes a lot of sense," he insists. "And while we really don't like regulations, we know that they are sometimes needed. Pooling data from On-Farm Network studies provides sound science on which to base regulations, so those we must have will help and not harm either the environment or our profit.

"I'd like to encourage the soybean association to continue to work in this area in conjunction with the Iowa State University and Extension, with a common goal of good policies and regulations. Regulations that increase our cost of production, but do not help the environment hurt society in the long run," he concludes.



Doug Volz

Doug Volz says he followed yield goal recommendations for nitrogen application from the time he began farming with his father, Gene, in 1974, until 1981.

"One day that fall," says the Dallas County farmer, "I made a mistake with the first tank of anhydrous of the day and put on 170 lbs. an acre instead of the 130 lbs. I was aiming to apply. I flagged the spot where I resumed with the second tank, at the correct rate, and had a seed dealer weigh the yields from the two different rates in the fall.

"I was surprised to learn that the lower nitrogen rate yielded 7 bu. per acre more than the higher rate," he tells. "Since that time, I've resisted the urge to bump up nitrogen rates."

Last spring, Volz tried another nitrogen rate experiment that changed his ideas about nitrogen needs even more. Here's how he tells it:

"I signed up with the ISA On-Farm Network to do a side-by-side nitrogen rate comparison on my farm. I have sidedressed NH_3 for the past few years, so at sidedressing time, I laid out six side-by-side strip tests with two nitrogen rates. The high rate I used was 150 lbs/acre; the low rate was 100 lbs/acre. I double flagged each of the six tests on both ends of the field so that no mistake could be made. The planting date and hybrid were the same across all six tests.

"This fall I harvested the first test, and the combine monitor told me the low rate was 5 bu. better than the high rate. I got out of the combine and counted the rows, found the flags, and looked at my notes, to make sure I had not made an error.