

I hadn't. The 100 lb. rate actually had out-yielded 150 lb. rate.

"I harvested the second set of strips and saw that once again the low rate had out-yielded the high rate. I found this hard to believe so I again got out of the combine, counted the rows, found the flags, and looked at my notes. I was right where I was supposed to be.

"When I finished the six tests, the low rate out-yielded the high rate in three, one test was a virtual tie, and in the other two, the high rate yielded more than the low rate. When I averaged all six tests, I found that the high rate gave me a 1.6 bu. per acre advantage over the low rate. I'd spent \$12 an acre more for the nitrogen that had given me only about \$5 an acre more corn."

While this was Volz's first experience with the On-Farm Network™, he says it won't be his last. As a member of the Dallas County Soil and Water Conservation District board of directors, he's encouraging other farmers in his area to participate, too.

He says that after he was elected to the SWCD board, he talked to other farmers about the amount of nitrogen they used and felt that some were using more than they should. Because of this belief, he suggested to the Dallas County SWCD board that they develop a program to pay farmers to put out side-by-side nitrogen rate tests. While the board was considering this, he learned about the ISA On-Farm Network. "I attended the Nitrogen Conference last February and learned that the On-Farm Network program was far better than anything our SWCD board could hope to do. We invited Tracy Blackmer and Roger Wolf to speak at the next SWCD meeting and invited Dallas County farmers to attend," he says. "I

signed up to do strip tests after the meeting."

This fall, Volz applied anhydrous with a nitrogen stabilizer, using a strip-till applicator. He put out replicated strips for a new On-Farm Network study, with his low nitrogen rate at 75 lbs. per acre and his high rate at 125 lbs.

He says attending the On-Farm Network conference last year was well worth his time, and he's encouraging others to attend this year, too. "Nitrogen loss from farm fields is one of the contributing factors to nitrate pollution, not only in Iowa's streams, rivers, and groundwater, but also in the hypoxia 'dead zone' in the Gulf of Mexico," he says.

"Sooner or later, the federal government is going to consider measures to limit the amount of nitrogen applied to Iowa cropland. If that happens, the ISA data will be instrumental in helping determine optimum nitrogen use rates," he says. "ISA has some of the most complete and comprehensive data available on this subject. The more farmers participate in these trials, the more helpful the ISA data will be in helping us keep allowable application rates at the most economic level, while at the same time minimizing nitrate pollution."

He says conducting side-by-side strip trials takes only a little more planning than just planting your fields, but insists farmers have nothing to lose by participating. "If your yield on the low rate falls below your yield on the high rate, the On-Farm Network will reimburse you for the bushels you lost, and, on top of that, you will be paid \$200.00 just for doing the test and providing the results to ISA," he says. "If you're like me, though, you may learn that you can get by with less nitrogen, and can cut your nitrogen costs by 20 to 30 percent."

