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TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2011

 <p><b>RESISTANCE FIGHTER</b>        Two new fungicides from DuPont are good news for apple and canola growers</p> <p><b>3B</b></p>	 <p><b>TOP QUALITY</b>        Bidders were willing to pay more for quality calves at the Hagersville sale</p> <p><b>5B</b></p>	 <p><b>SPOTLIGHT ON RAMS</b>        Ewes get most of the attention prior to breeding, but don't forget the rams</p> <p><b>12B</b></p>
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A Dunnville-area grower is getting 299 bushel corn and 60-plus bushel soybeans with minimal fertilizer inputs

**BY PETER RESCHKE**  
*Ontario Farmer*

Dean Glenney has a message for all those growers who believe that some tillage is essential for higher yields. "Come on out and have a look at my fields."

Ironically, the Dunnville-area farmer says he was inspired to do away with tillage some years ago when he acquired a bigger plow. The extra furrow width took away some of the soil at the edge of the fencerow and he got a close-up look at what undisturbed soil looks like. The corn rows planted into that crumbly virgin soil grew two feet taller than the rest, he recalls.

That observation started him on a path to a system that he calls "fence-row farming", essentially trying to duplicate those fencerow conditions every 30 inches across the field. It means no tillage, twin-row corn and soybeans, and planting each year directly on top of the previous year's rows.

It's been a steep learning curve punctuated by a lot of adjustments but consider the results: his corn yield this year, on 200 acres, fell just a bushel short of 300, and his soybeans, which he calls the "sacrificial lamb" because they have to contend with starting out on top of the old corn root balls, came in at 62 bushels, with a high of 71.

Oh, and did I mention he only fertilizes for a 150-bushel yield target?

Things didn't look quite that rosy when he started. His land, which he describes as a poorly drained blackish clay loam with a hard layer of blue clay two feet down, had been in berry



## Back to the fencerow

**Dean Glenney stands among corn and soybean plants in one of his Dunnville-area plots. He says bringing the soil back to "fencerow" condition has paid significant yield dividends on his farm.**

production for a lot of years. Each year the roto-tiller made a nice seedbed but the effects further down didn't become apparent until another grower rented some land to grow carrots. They hit that hard pan, created by years of tilling, and "it was like hitting a brick wall," he recalls.

"There also wasn't an earthworm to be found."

So Glenney started to develop his unique system of no-till. He built his

own planter to do twin rows and to place fertilizer bands exactly in the same spot year after year. One modification that worked particularly well was to replace the seed opener on one side with a slightly larger disc. "It created a leading edge coulter. It suddenly worked like a completely different planter," he recalls.

The next challenge in those years was being able to stay on the same row each year. "We didn't have GPS at first and

we did it all by eye," he recalls. And even when the first GPS appeared on the market, there was the problem of satellite drift that could throw you off kilter from one day to the next.

It took a \$50,000 expenditure in an RTK system to finally solve these problems, he says. "Now I can do test plots anywhere on the farm and come back to exactly the same spot where

• See **FENCEROW** on page 4



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## FENCEROW

• Continued from page 1

I left off.”

Benefits don't come instantly. It's been a long steady climb for his corn yields, Glenney says. The first time he noticed things were going in the right direction was when the combine couldn't make it up and down the rows before having to dump. “We came up about

300 feet short of where we normally had to unload,” he recalls.

He borrowed a weigh wagon and found the yield was 236 bushels. “We never told anyone that first year.”

But yields kept climbing, on average about 10 bushels a year, he says. Last year they reached 283 bushels and this year the high was 299 despite the fact that some of the crop didn't get planted until May 30. Those

**“When it's waist high it looks almost black, it's so green.”**

— Dean Glenney

plants were a lot shorter than the May 15-planted ones but they still came in over 200 bushels, he says.

Glenney credits the profusion of soil life created by his “fence-row” system for giving the crop both vigour and stress tolerance. “The worms have opened up the soil so much that the roots and the water are able to go down easily.”

It showed up clearly in one test plot this year when he tried irrigating half the plot during the hot, dry period in July. “There was virtually no difference in yields between the irrigated and non-irrigated plots.”

“The roots were still able to go down and get what they needed.”

Yield is only part of the story. Input cost is the other. While his yields are getting higher, Glenney says his fertilizer costs have stayed down. “I'm essentially fertilizing for

a 150-bushel crop,” he says.

His inputs work out to .7 lbs of N per bushel of yield, .16 lbs of P and .2 lbs of K.

While his soil test calls for an application of 220 lbs of K, “I put on 45.” The rest is supplied by the biological activity in the soil. Is that sustainable in the long run? Glenney admits he's not sure.

His fertilizer regimen includes liquid starter on the seed, “a bit of dry” between the rows and 28% on each side of the twin rows. He then comes back and side-dresses with 28% in the centre of the row “when I can still get through the corn.”

Planting on the previous year's row can make for a tough start. Glenney says that his instinct keeps telling him to make a seedbed to get the

seed off to a quicker start. “But I resist.”

He says the corn tends to struggle until it's about six inches tall. “Then it's like a switch goes off.” The roots hit those worm channels and the crop “never looks back. When it's waist high it looks almost black, it's so green.”

The earthworms that used to be so rare are now everywhere. Glenney says they start working on the corn leaves in September when the plants are still standing in the field. “Anything that touches the ground, you can see it being pulled down a worm hole.”

It's obvious to anyone who comes out to take a look. Glenney recalls one visitor walking along the corn rows. “He told me ‘I'm afraid to step on anything’.

## Floury hybrids can be fed sooner

The list of benefits from leafy silage corn hybrids with the floury gene just keeps getting longer.

An email last week from Matt Anderson, product development manager at Pickseed, pointed out that these hybrids can be fed immediately after harvest. That compares to “other silage options (that) contain a high level of vitreous starch and prolamins which are not soluble in water or in the rumen fluid and therefore benefit from being ensiled for eight to 10 months before feedout,” he says. Farmers that don't want to wait so long prefer the floury hybrids, he adds.

Pickseed released its first silage-specific leafy, floury corn hybrid in 2005. It was called ExPert and rated for maturity at 2775 CHU. The company now carries two different versions of the original hybrid with ExPert Hx and ExPert 2.

ExPert Hx adds above-ground insect protection and Liberty Link herbicide tolerance to the mix.

Anderson says farmers have responded positively to the feed quality and yield. But he adds that the agronomics can be a bit different than other silage options because plants are taller and have more leaves above large ears with large kernels. They do better at lower populations of around 28,000, he says.

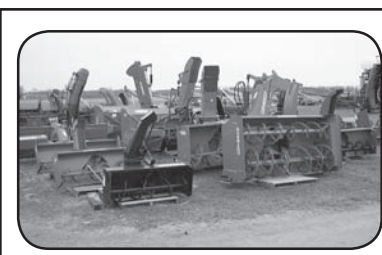
They also give farmers a longer optimum harvest period before the kernels get too hard or the crop gets too dry.



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