

Planter Maintenance a Winters Activity

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At Orthman we promote three *Principles of Strip Till* that we feel needs to be correct on every acre of strip till.

- 1) Ideal Seedbed Preparation
- 2) Precision Nutrient Placement
- 3) Optimal Root Zone Conditioning



Example of Iowa Grower testing his planter units

With Orthman Agronomist, Product Specialist, and Territory Managers all working and suggesting to our customers, to get the best possible seedbed for your planter to plant on, we need the planter to be properly maintained and in the best working condition possible. This is an off season effort to address any moving parts on the planter that may help for an even drop with correct spacing and seed depth. No matter if your planter is new or old you need to spend time with it so it is adjusted to give you the best possible plant stand. Seed meters are a key part in your final plant stand. Take the time to open up the seed meters, clean out and replace the worn out parts. Depending on the number of acres you will be planting, this will help set how much wear you can have before replacement. Running seed meters on a planter stand is a possibility, many producers even run new units on a planter stand. Please remember it is not how you plant the first field, but how the planter plants for the season. If you do not understand all the parts of your seed meter and planter, contact your planter dealer and let them explain proper settings to you. It is much easier to spend a little time in the off season improving your plant stand and preventing a planter breakdown than during the planting season.

The planter; drive chains, drive cables, and bearings are very important for seed spacing whether ground driven or driven by the tractors hydraulic system – proper maintenance is key. If there is a hard or uneven link on a row, it can affect all rows. It is also very common to have a bearing that warms up more than other bearings which will affect more than one row's plant stand. It is not a bad idea to check all planters, even new planters by making it run like planting but with no seed in and not moving.

Areas on a planter that are overlooked by many producers are the “Seeing Eye” equipment, different types of depth adjustments, and checking your seed tubes. As a crop consultant for 26 years, and now an agronomist for Orthman, I have been in several fields where seed depth and spacing was very uneven; all what I know to be poor setup and maintenance. Many times these were small things that could have been addressed easily before the planter went to the field. Remember that your plant stand cannot be corrected after the planter leaves the field. Many research trials, by multiple different sites, conclude that a seedling emerging over 24 hours different than the rest of the field should be considered a weed. I have read one specific study that stated that if seed eruption is over 12 hours apart, it is considered a weed.



Winter maintenance is key!