

Space It Till You Make It

Speakers:

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Objectives:

To demonstrate the impact of different plant populations, and row spacing

Collaborator: Manitoba Corn Growers Association

Demonstration Summary:

Corn can tolerate some variability in seed spacing. Yield is not significantly affected by small gaps as long as the proper seeding rate is delivered. Uniform seed distribution within the row should be the goal of the seeding operation. Therefore, producers should consider evaluating their planter performance to ensure uniformity of plant spacing.

A well-tuned planter operating at a reasonable speed should help to minimize non-uniformity of plant spacing within the row. Planting at high speeds with a poorly maintained planter can result in a large number of doubles (two-plant hills) and skips (missing plants). Doubles can result in barren stalks and skips can cause significant yield loss, both resulting in lost yield potential for the field. Producers can also do some crop scouting once the crop is up and growing to determine if plant spacing is acceptable.

Producers should also consider increasing their target plant populations. Studies at the University of Guelph suggests that at relatively high populations (28,000 to 36,000 plants per acre), populations with less uniform corn plant spacing have generally not yielded lower than plots with more precise planting. Simply put, higher population may compensate for sloppy spacing - but at the cost of more seed per acre.