

Southwest Family Farms

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Southwest Family Farms News

Controlled Traffic Farming

Controlled traffic farming (CTF) is an idea that is often attempted but rarely fully implemented. The idea behind the practice is to make all trips across the field in the same path every time. To achieve this, all planters, seeders, sprayers, and harvesting equipment need to be the same width or need to have a common denominator. We have chosen 40 foot as the common denominator on our farm (40' planters, drills, heads, and 120' sprayers). The philosophy behind CTF is to confine soil compaction to a much smaller area. Clint started implementing CTF when he began to repeatedly travel in the same paths each time he sprayed. We were finding that the sprayer would sink a little on the first pass, but wouldn't sink any more with each additional pass. According to the University of Nebraska Extension about 80% of compaction is created on the first pass. Each subsequent pass compacts the previous track minimally.

During the past 5 years, the drought has forced us to improve efficiency with our equipment to better utilize the little moisture we have received. When we planted our 2009 dryland milo crop, we had very little soil moisture. What we saw made us change the way we farm. The old combine tracks created compaction, and we didn't receive enough moisture to help "fix" the compaction created. The lack of moisture that year left the compacted track hard and dry throughout the season. When it came time to plant, there was very little soil moisture in the tracks. Every time the planter row units crossed over an old combine track we saw a significant reduction in plant population. We decided that we needed to find a way to plant the milo crop without crossing any of the combine tracks. *Continued on page 2*

The picture to the right shows how we are implementing CTF. The black lines indicate existing tracks left by the 120' sprayer. The outside tires of the tractor travel in the same tracks, and milo is planted in between the duals and never in a compacted track.



Controlled Traffic Farming

The past two years we have transitioned our equipment to meet the 40' traffic pattern. Now, every pass we make through the field is in the same tracks left from the previous pass. It is as if we are creating "roads" that we drive on as we are going across the field, which leaves more residue standing in the field and limits compaction to a much smaller area. Another theory behind CTF is that crops grow better in clean soil and tires work better on roads. By utilizing CTF, we are able to plant seeds into soil rather than placing some seeds on top of the residue left by the old crop row. CTF has even allowed our strip till application to improve. We now are able to strip till in between tracks left by combines from the previous harvest. This helps create a more uniform seed bed in preparation of the next crop and also allows us to pull the tool bar faster.

In 2014, we will experiment with adjusting tire air pressure in our equipment to further reduce soil compaction. New technology in tires has allowed us to select taller tires that now require lower operating air pressure. A taller tire with lower air pressure will give the tire a larger contact surface area, which will reduce soil compaction and also gain traction.

Transitioning to a controlled traffic pattern has been a journey. We learn something new every time we make a pass through the field. Moisture is often our limiting factor so the ultimate goal is to produce more grain with every drop of water we receive or apply. Below are a couple of pictures that illustrate how we are using this system of farming.



Happy 85th!

On September 2, Kat turned 85 years old. Twenty-five family members were able to get together to help her celebrate this milestone birthday. Kat is very active on the farm, and serves many needs. She is always willing to help out in anyway. Happy birthday Kat!



Newlyweds

On August 13, Clint Reiss and Christina were married in Antigua. Christina is originally from Emporia, but has lived in Garden City, Kansas for past 15 years. Clint and Christina now live in Kismet, and Christina has decided to work full time in our farm office. She has already become a huge asset, and we feel very fortunate and blessed to have her as a part of our family and farm!

The Ol' Barn

This year we said goodbye to a couple of old landmarks on the farm. This summer we decided it was time to take down the old barn, out house, grainery, and chicken house. Some of these buildings stood for over 100 years and served the farm quite well. Over the years, storms and severe winds have taken their toll on the old buildings. Constant repairs were needed and the structures were becoming very unstable. The buildings were tore down in July, and we have begun construction on a new farm shop that will take their place. Farm equipment continues to get larger and we are unable to get much of the farm equipment into our existing 35 year old shop. The new shop will be designed to handle our largest equipment and give us and our employees a nice place to make repairs inside. Feel free to stop by and check out the new shop as it is being built this winter.



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Farm Videos available

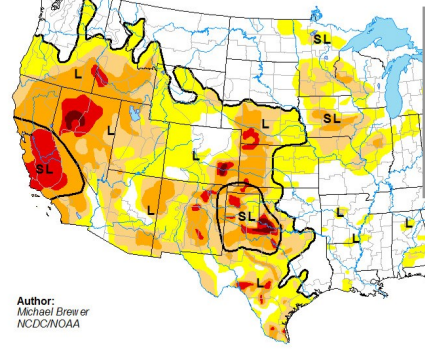
www.youtube.com/southwestfamilyfarms



What's Going On At Southwest Family Farms

U.S. Drought Monitor

December 3, 2013
(Released Thursday, Dec. 5, 2013)
Valid 7 a.m. EST

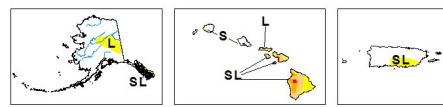


The drought has eased slightly this year, but a lot of moisture is needed to replenish soil moisture. We received almost 15" of rain in Seward County, the most in 4 years.

Drought Impact Types:
 ~ Delineates dominant impacts
 S= Short-Term, typically less than 6 months (e.g. agriculture, grasslands)
 L= Long-Term, typically greater than 6 months (e.g. hydrology, ecology)

Intensity:
 D0 Abnormally Dry
 D1 Moderate Drought
 D2 Severe Drought
 D3 Extreme Drought
 D4 Exceptional Drought

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USDA
<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

