

## **No Till Notes**

Date: For the week of June 7, 2009

### **May Forgot Us**

By Mark Watson, Panhandle No Till Educator

After such a good start to the growing season, Mother Nature forgot about us in May. We received .73 inches of rain in May, or 2.14 inches below normal for the month. We are now running a deficit of .21 of an inch for the year. The good news is June started off with a bang and we received 1.5 inches of rain on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June. This rain was a real blessing for the dry land wheat, field peas and the summer pastures around the area.

Thus far during this irrigation season we have applied 2.25 inches of irrigation on our winter wheat crop. We waited to start irrigating until our centibar readings were in the mid 60s on our silt loam soils, and in the mid 20s on our sandier soils in the 1<sup>st</sup> foot of soil. The 2nd foot of soil also had some depletion when we started irrigating. After irrigating, the top foot has rebounded to field capacity while the second foot continues to show slow depletion. Our goal for the season is to also have depletion in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> foot levels without loss of yield.

We started by applying .75 of an inch the 3 times around with the pivot. We irrigated this amount to bring the 1<sup>st</sup> foot of soil back to field capacity. We also try to save some room in the profile for rains like we just received so we have room to store this moisture. I'll check in a few days to see if we ran moisture through the soil profile or not.

Even with the abundant moisture during the early spring planting, I couldn't help but notice all the center pivots that were irrigating. Numerous pivots were irrigating to replace moisture that was lost during spring tillage operations prior to planting. Whether the ground was tilled in a more conventional method, or with strip till machinery, the result was the same. Any tillage operation prior to planting required center pivot irrigation to water the field and prevent the seedlings from becoming dry.

With no till crop production practices this irrigation was unnecessary. We are able to keep all the moisture stored and protected from the drying sun and wind with our residue. This allows us to plant into a firm, moist seedbed which is ideal for planting. The residue on the surface will also aid in storing moisture throughout the growing season by reducing soil moisture evaporation. The residue will also help with water infiltration by protecting the soil surface during a rainfall or irrigation event.

Our goal of making a serious effort at saving our valuable water resource and becoming more efficient with the water we irrigate with starts with no till farming practices. There is no better crop production system which allows us to manage the soil moisture as efficiently as no till crop production practices. I would encourage everyone who is not adopting no till to learn more about this production practice and begin adopting no till farming in your operation. We've got to do all we can to save our valuable water resource for the generations to come.

I have scheduled a field day for June 15, 2009 at 9:00am at the Barney and Jerame Steger farm. The farm is located in north of Chappell, Ne. Directions from town

are to go to the east edge of Chappell, go north on Road 167 to Road 26. East on 26 to road 171, then north 1/2 mile.