

Minimum tillage or chemical fallow of wheat

of minimum tillage and chemical control of weeds may prove to be a real break through in reducing soil erosion and maintaining and improving wheat yields.



A typical fall seeded wheat operation. Note drifted snow and results of wind erosion along fence.

By HAROLDE. KERR

What are the prospects for parking the plow in the corner of the barnyard and growing wheat without tillage.

Every once in awhile someone brings up this possibility. "Just where are we in researching the problems and advantages of no-till farming" is the question I recently asked Don Rydrych, weed research specialist at the Columbia Basin Research Center in Pendleton. His comments are summarized as follows:

1. With tillage, weed control with herbicides generally costs \$4 - \$7 per acre. No tillage and reduced tillage will cost more for herbicides but savings from tillage reduction will offset a large portion of this cost. Presently, no-tillage will cost about \$10 more per acre than our present practices. This cost difference may be reduced with increased fuel, machinery and labor costs in the future.

2. There will be some other disadvantages from no-till agriculture, such as new and more weed problems, firmer seed beds which may require new types of drills, cooler soil temperatures which will retard germination and lack of surface moisture for seeding. These problems may make no-till farming impractical for much of our area.

Advantages of no-till farming are of course, 1: reduce erosion from wind and water; 2. yields may be superior according to research plots located at Pendleton, Moro and Hermiston, conducted by OSU Experiment Station personnel, especially in better moisture years.

Less fuel and less need for certain kinds of equipment will mean fewer trips over the field and less soil compaction.

Weed control seems to be the key. Cheatgrass becomes a real serious problem during the crop year in many areas. New chemicals such as Sencor and Lexone are giving 80-98 per cent control of cheatgrass in the growing crop. When these chemicals are available to the growers, a combination



A corn planter used for no-till cultivation. Prototypes similar to this will need to be developed for the wheat—summer fallow area.



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