An Ontario farmer says his wheat yields went up 12 bu. per acre when he started planting wheat with a corn planter instead of a drill.

Morley Wallace of North Gower, Ontario, says that in addition to yield boosts, he uses 11 percent less seed because the crop is planted according to seed population rather than by grain weight. Although the rows were wider apart (15-in. rows versus 7-in. with grain drill), more plants grew per row.

“The corn planter is able to achieve a far more accurate and consistent seed depth than a grain drill, regardless of soil conditions,” he explains. “The benefits of this system are just phenomenal. I’ve now done three years of wheat this way, using different farms and different growers, and have consistently seen the average 12 bu. yield increase with the corn planter. Also, the grain quality is a full grade higher.”

Wheat is planted in 15-in. rows. Consistent seed depth and spacing leads to uniform growth and better quality grain, says Wallace.

Consistent seed depth and seed spacing leads to uniform growth and better quality grain, he points out. Because the row spacing is that much wider, it allows more air movement and more crop movement.

Wallace says he plants 1.2 million seeds per acre.

He uses a Trimble EZ-Steer GPS system to ensure precision-on-row planting with the corn planter, and the GPS is also used to analyze the field and yield data.

His White 6600 corn planter is fitted with inter-plant units. He changes the plates on each seeding row unit for wheat. This results in 11-row, 15-in. wheat rows. He also uses the planter in corn and beans.

Wallace has found an unconventional way to dramatically cut his input costs while increasing yields - it involves a 4-year rotation of three different crops.

He still applies liquid fertilizer with the planter when necessary (22 liters/acre on corn, 11 liters/acre on soybeans, and 11 liters/acre on wheat), but the major savings is from not having to broadcast nitrogen for the wheat.

Although a corn planter is worth between $75,000 and $100,000, Wallace says not needing any other types of planters makes this system worthwhile.

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Low-Cost, Hand-Pumped Milker

When Maggie Leman and Dan Dawson went looking for a portable milker for their miniatures, they couldn’t find one that they liked so Dan designed his own.

“I saw a hand-powered portable milker on the internet that was designed for milking horses,” recalls Leman. “I didn’t think it would fit goats easily and it cost more than I wanted to spend.”

He put together his own by using materials laying around the house. It worked well enough that they tested it with more durable components. After showing it to others, they began to offer it for sale early this year for use on miniatures or full-size goats. It can also be used on sheep, llamas, horses, and other animals.

“We’ve sold more than we ever thought we would,” recalls Leman. “Within two weeks of our first sales, we had customers telling us how much they loved the milker. It even works when the animal is lying down. One customer used it to collect colostrum from a doe that couldn’t get up.”

Leman and Dawson advertise in dairy goat trade journals and promote the milker on their website. It sells for $45. A larger teat cup for half gallon and gallon sizes, with vented lids also offer closed system receptacles in pint, quart, and gallon sizes.

“Instead I bought a spray bottle with a pad-del handle,” she recalls. “I also picked up one 1/4-in. clear plastic tubing and a 35 cc syringe and connected the tube on the spray pump to the syringe.”

Once the goat udder had been washed and the syringe was wetted with a squirt of milk, Dunn slipped it over the goat’s teat. She then began pumping the spray handle, which quickly created a vacuum seal. Milk began to flow with each compression, and Dunn massaged the udder while squeezing the handle until the udder felt empty. Not only did she not have to hold the syringe in place, but when she finished, she had to break the vacuum seal to remove it.

“Worked great, and I used it for a month before I had surgery, and my neighbor used it for a month and a half while I recovered. It emptied the udder out real well without a lot of stripping,” says Dunn.

“Of my does has one teat that’s smaller and I thought I would need a smaller syringe, but I didn’t.”

She cleaned the pump nightly with cold and then hot water pumped through it. Once a week, she soaked it in hot water with dish detergent and pumped that through it. She also pumped white vinegar through it. She doesn’t use the milker anymore since her doctors feel the milking by hand is good therapy. However, she has held on to it and recently used it to collect colostrum.

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