

Using Skip-Rows for Soybean Pest Management May Increase Soybean Profit

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There are several soybean pest problems that Ohio growers may have to deal with in August, 2005. The soybean aphid was a very serious pest problem in some Ohio soybean fields in 2001 and 2003, and is predicted to be serious again in 2005. Other problems include the bean leaf beetle, Japanese beetle, Mexican bean beetle, and possibly soybean rust. Most fields are planted in 7.5-inch rows and will need to be sprayed in late July or in August, well after the soybean canopy has closed which will cause a yield loss due to soybean plants being run down. Fortunately, most commercial sprayers have narrow tires so only two rows are run down as the sprayer crosses a field. Table 1 shows the loss (bu/acre, \$/acre) when two rows are destroyed during pesticide application in mid to late summer by varying size sprayers.

Table 1: Skip row economics.

Spray boom width (ft)	Rows covered per pass	Yield loss %	Yield loss (bu/acre)	\$/acre loss:					
				\$5.00/bu	\$5.50/bu	\$6.00/bu	\$6.50/bu	\$7.00/bu	\$7.50/bu
50	80	2.50	1.25	6.25	6.88	7.50	8.13	8.75	9.38
60	96	2.10	1.05	5.25	5.78	6.30	6.83	7.35	7.88
70	112	1.80	0.90	4.50	4.95	5.40	5.85	6.30	6.75
80	128	1.56	0.78	3.90	4.29	4.68	5.07	5.46	5.85
90	144	1.39	0.70	3.48	3.82	4.17	4.52	4.87	5.21
120	192	1.04	0.52	2.60	2.86	3.12	3.38	3.64	3.90

Following is an example of the calculations to determine the cost of establishing skip rows with a drill. In this example we used a 30-foot wide drill, a 60-foot wide sprayer, a seed cost of \$40.00 pre acre and soybean grain worth \$6.50 per bushel, and assumed 15" row yields of 48 bu/ac and 7.5" row yields of 50 bu/ac.

Numerous soybean row spacing studies indicate that for soybeans planted the first three weeks of May, the yield difference between 15-inch and 7.5-inch rows varies from no difference to about two bushels per acre depending on soil type, weather, and plant growth. By not planting two of the 48 rows (4.2%) on a 30-foot wide drill, and assuming a two bushel per acre yield loss, the yield would be reduced by 2 bu/ac times 4.2%, which is 5.04 pounds of grain per acre which is worth \$0.55/ac. If seed costs \$40.00/ac, the savings for not planting two rows is \$1.68 (4.2% times \$40). Because the four rows next to the two 15-inch middles have lower plant populations than normal for 15-inch rows, there could be a yield loss of up to 5% on those four rows which represent 16.6% of the 15" rows that could be planted in 30 feet. The reduced yield from those four rows will be 0.4 bu/ac worth \$2.59/ac (16.6% x 5% x 48 bu/ac x \$6.50/bu). Therefore, making skip rows with a 30 foot drill will lower income by \$1.46/ac (\$1.68 - \$0.55 - \$2.60 = \$1.46). Based on these calculations, there is almost always less yield and income loss due to the establishment of skip rows than there would be from running down two rows in mid to late summer during the application of pesticides. The results of calculations for other size drills are shown in Table 2. Table 3 indicates the total cost to form skip rows for combinations of drill size, seed cost per acre, and grain value.

Table 2: Yield and income lost (bu/ac, \$/ac) when two 7.5-inch soybean rows are left unplanted by various size planters to form skip rows that facilitate pesticide application in mid to late summer.

Planter width (ft)	Possible 7.5" rows	% Rows not planted	Yield lost		Savings in Seed (\$/ac)	Yield lost on 4-15" rows (\$/ac)	Total cost (\$/ac)
			(lb/ac)	(\$/ac)			
15	24	8.30	10	1.08	3.32	5.18	2.94
20	32	6.25	7.5	0.82	2.52	3.90	2.20
30	48	4.20	5.0	0.55	1.68	2.59	1.46
40	64	3.12	3.75	0.40	1.24	1.95	1.11

Table 3. Total cost to form skip-rows for different combinations of drill size, seed cost per acre, and grain value.

Drill Width	Seed Cost (\$/ac)	Grain Value (\$/bu)					
		5.00	5.50	6.00	6.50	7.00	7.50
15	25	2.74	3.22	3.70	4.18	4.66	4.37
	35	1.91	2.39	2.87	3.35	3.83	4.32
	40	1.49	1.98	2.46	2.94	3.42	3.90
	45	1.08	1.56	2.04	2.52	3.00	3.49
	55	0.25	0.73	1.21	1.69	2.17	2.66
	65	(.058)	(0.10)	0.38	0.86	1.34	1.83
20	25	2.06	2.42	2.78	3.14	3.51	3.78
	35	1.43	1.79	2.15	2.51	2.88	3.24
	40	1.11	1.47	1.84	2.20	2.56	2.93
	45	0.80	1.16	1.52	1.88	2.25	2.61
	55	0.17	0.53	0.89	1.25	1.62	1.98
	65	(0.47)	(0.10)	0.26	0.62	0.99	1.35
30	25	1.36	1.60	1.84	2.09	2.33	2.57
	35	0.94	1.18	1.42	1.67	1.91	2.15
	40	0.73	0.97	1.21	1.46	1.70	1.94
	45	0.52	0.76	1.00	1.25	1.49	1.73
	55	0.10	0.34	0.58	0.83	1.07	1.31
	65	(0.32)	(0.08)	0.16	0.41	0.65	0.89
40	25	1.04	1.22	1.40	1.58	1.76	1.94
	35	0.73	0.91	1.09	1.27	1.45	1.63
	40	0.57	0.75	0.93	1.11	1.29	1.48
	45	0.42	0.60	0.78	0.96	1.14	1.32
	55	0.11	0.29	0.47	0.65	0.83	1.03
	65	(0.21)	(0.02)	0.16	0.34	0.52	0.70

When forming skip rows it is important that they be the correct distance apart to accommodate the sprayer that will be used. Many sprayers are adjustable and can accommodate wheel spacings of eight to twelve feet. The ideal combination of drill and sprayer width is when the sprayer is three times as wide as the drill. With that combination the sprayer will use the 2nd, 5th, 8th, etc. pass of the drill when making applications. If the sprayer is either two or four times as wide as the drill, the first sprayer pass should be positioned to spray from the edge of the field to the center of a drill pass by disabling nozzles on the end of the sprayer. It will then be possible to use the skip rows for spraying the remainder of the field. Sprayers that are not full multiple widths of the drill will not be able to use skip row systems unless the sprayer size is either increased or decreased to meet that requirement. The following illustration shows how to use a 60-, 90-, and 120-foot sprayer with a 30-foot drill.

Spraying Skip Rows

with a 60', 90', and 120' sprayer

