

## Extension Notes

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

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### Corn Planting Tips

Corn planting season is upon us. Traditional planting dates are April 1 through May 1 in Western Kentucky and April 15 to May 15 in Central and Eastern Kentucky. Proper planting is important to minimize risks to the crop later in the growing season. Here are some tips and important considerations as you ready your planters.

First, you should note that the previous six growing seasons have been among the wettest of the past 30 years. So far, it has been considerably wet again this year across much of the state. Current weather conditions and a comparison of previous growing seasons could change the way you approach this planting season.

Usually, we determine seeding rates based on how likely it is that the soil will have adequate moisture when pollination and seed fill occurs. UK research has shown that when our corn crop has adequate water, higher populations increase yields. Irrigated fields can handle much higher populations, up to 42,000 seeds per acre in 30-inch rows. When the crop lacks water, higher populations hurt yields. Your soil depth should also factor into your seeding rate. Deep soils can handle higher populations of 32,000 to 36,000 seeds per acre. You should use lower seeding rates on shallower soils. If you plant on heavily eroded hillsides, your rate should be less than 26,000 seeds per acre.

Corn should be planted at a uniform depth, typically between 1.5 to 2 inches deep. Uniform planting depth allows for even emergence. Shallow planted corn runs a higher risk for late-season lodging, developing a potassium deficiency and slower development. To that end, make sure your planter's row closers are fully operational, because if they are not, you could be inadvertently planting shallower than you intended.

In Kentucky in 2019, earlier planted corn did better than corn that was planted late. This was due to the weather turning dry in July and August. Corn that was already into seed fill during the dry period suffered very little from the weather. Ideally, we say wait for dry weather and the proper temperature to plant corn, but we also realize that we would have planted very little corn in 2019 had we waited for ideal weather conditions. Realize if you are planting into wet soils or "mudding in" corn, it increases your risk for sidewall compaction. Compaction restricts root growth and hurts your yields far more than a later planting date. However, if soils continue to be wet throughout much of the spring, consider a spiked-tooth closing wheel and back off the down pressure.

If we are going to plant in riskier conditions, it's important that we try to reduce our risks up front and be prepared to scout fields for problems as the season progresses. Take the time to make sure your planting equipment and any of its sensors are functioning properly and that you are getting the proper planting depth, closed rows and correct seed placement in each field. Double checking your work takes time, but it could help you avoid potential problems later. Producers who pay attention to details are more likely to end up with better stands.

More information on corn planting is available at the Carter County Cooperative Extension Office of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service. Educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expressions, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.