

Speedtiller a burning alternative

Kate Pollard | Updated May 24, 2012, 12:00 am



If stubbles are giving you a headache and you are sick of burning, stubble raking or using a Kelly chain, a Speedtiller could be the answer.

For the past few weeks, the K-Line Speedtiller 2900 has been demonstrated on farms across the Great Southern.

K-Line director Bill Larsen said Speedtillers were relatively new in WA - the first one was sent from Adelaide only six months ago.

Mr Larsen said it was designed after growers were noticing heavy stubbles and wet summers were causing weed problems and chemical resistance.

It's used for seedbed preparation, to increase organic matter in the soil, for weed control and trash management.

In the eastern states, Mr Larsen said growers were also incorporating lime, chemicals and even urea.

In WA, there are machines ranging from 3-12.8m wide.

Kojonup Agricultural Supplies partner and agronomist Peter Hills has been doing test strips for farmers interested in seeing how the Speedtiller performs in their soils and different stubbles using a 3.5m machine with two rows of discs and a crumble roller at the back.

Mr Hills said he read about the machine when using a Grizzly disc and wanted something that would leave the soil better prepared for pre-emergent chemicals and to help increase organic carbons and stimulate microbial activity.

"We've been trying it at depths from two to six inches and at speeds of 10-17km/h and the optimum speed seems to be around 15km/h," he said.

"We have tested it on 5-tonne wheat stubbles and the results have been fantastic, leaving it ideally set up for chemicals to work and the bar can get through with no blockages.

"It leaves the soil quite level and after a few days it settles and looks quite good."

What prompted Mr Hills to try a Speedtiller was summer weeds and high stubble loads.

"We have a couple of farms where we have trouble with summer weeds, so this is a good option for us," he said.

"We can let the summer weeds get going and then run over them with this and crush them to pieces while gaining some benefit for the soil."

With no till, Mr Hills said they had been retaining stubbles which took a long time to break down.

"This machine speeds the whole process up and from a frost point of view, if we can reduce stubble loads on top of the soil, we can increase ground temperature which might be all we need to reduce the frost risk, or the severity of a frost," he said.

Rocky paddocks have not been a problem yet for Mr Hills who has tried to find as many rocks as possible to see what damage could occur.

"The disc modules on the tiller are mounted on solid rubber so there is quite a bit of flex and they seem to ride out if they hit something hard," Mr Hills said.

"It takes all the vibration out of the machine."

He said the machine would be used ideally from harvest to early April - the hotter the days, the more the straw would break up.

"The only concern we do have, and will watch this year, is whether we are burying the weed seeds at depth where they are still going to grow and come through later in the season."

Next year, they will have a 10m Speedtiller available for contract or dry hire. Kojonup Ag is also an agent for the Speedtiller in the Great Southern.

"We might try putting our triple liquid cart in front of it and in the summer months look at putting out ammonium sulphate with a bit of molasses or something like that so we can get the stubble to break down quicker and really get the bug action happening," Mr Hills said.

"It won't be a machine for everyone but it's an option for those not wanting to burn."



For more information, contact Kojonup Ag Supplies on 9831 1022 or Peter Hills on 0428 310 398