

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Horton Seed Services is all about yield – and family

Three brothers utilize technology and data analysis to drive growth in western Kansas

Leoti, KS, June 20, 2014 — Rick, Matt and Alec Horton grew up on the farm. Their parents, Ken and Toni, moved to Wichita County, KS, in 1979 and built a business as well as a happy family. The drylands of Kansas aren't always the most hospitable to farming, but the Hortons have thrived through a combination of determination, adaptation and diversification of talents. At the heart of today's Horton Seed Services, a family farm and certified seed dealer, are three brothers who complement each other's strengths.

"We're each specialized in something different, and we trust that everyone is doing the best job they can in their category," says oldest brother Rick Horton. "That's why it works for us."

All three brothers are Kansas State University educated. Rick has a degree in agribusiness and oversees the business operations on the farm. Matt's degree is in mechanical engineering; he's the technical specialist, webmaster and data analyst. Alec just wrapped up his third year in the agronomy program and brings biotechnology and plant science to the company. This range of education and experience provides a distinct advantage to Horton Seed Services and its clients.

Local Know-How

The Hortons test every wheat variety they sell under different circumstances to determine how each one fares in local conditions.

This includes analyzing soil moisture and type, seed size, planting depth and spacing, seed treatments, fertilizer program, planting date and maturity rates. It's a lot of data to collect, compile and evaluate — a process that requires state-of-the-art farm hardware, powerful computer software and all three brothers' expertise.

The result is Horton Seed Services' seeding rate recommendations — specific guidelines for each variety on the number of pounds of seed to plant per acre in order to achieve the largest possible yield.

Farmers have been surprised to learn that instead of just dropping the standard 60 pounds of seed per acre, they can maximize their yield by adjusting seeding rates after factoring in all of the variants of the particular year's conditions. For example, to achieve the proper estimated finished heads per acre last year, the Hortons realized the best results with 38 to 56 pounds per acre on dryland wheat, depending on the variety.

"You can only sustain so much plant out there," explains Rick. "You can have a fantastic field of wheat where it's so dense you can't even walk through it. But at jointing stage, when head size is determined, it could be 30 percent less than it needs to be depending upon water availability. You don't want your field to sustain only plant material. We are trying to achieve the right amount of plant with the biggest heads of wheat filled with grain come harvest time. Everything comes back to determining the greatest yield we can get with the moisture we've got."

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The Hortons further enhance their seeding rate recommendations with suggestions on which wheat varieties farmers should sow based on drought tolerance, tillering capability, straw strength, crop rotation needs, local conditions, risk mitigation (planting several varieties instead of just one) and a host of other factors. Limagrain Cereal Seeds varieties have repeatedly come out on top.

“T158 has been an outstanding wheat for us — by far our best seller. We can send it out to Colorado, northwest Kansas and south because of its drought tolerance. It’s an adaptable wheat that will stand up to just about anything you throw at it,” asserts Rick. “And we’re really excited about LCS Wizard. It’s the first year out for seed dealers, and it looks like a high yielder with excellent straw strength. Actually, most LCS varieties have stiff straw, which keeps the stubble standing and means the wheat is able to hold snow longer in the winter and give you less residue loss come spring. Standability is a major plus, as stripper stubble and no-till become more prevalent farming practices.”

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Established in 1979, Horton Seed Services is a family-owned and operated farm located 22 miles south of Leoti and 26 miles north of Lakin in western Kansas. The company offers certified seed sales, portable certified seed cleaning and portable seed treating.

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