

Fall Bedding

BEDDING ADVANTAGES

LESS COMPACTION

The primary tillage work for fall bedding is done in a time of the year when the soil is dryer, less susceptible to compaction and more conducive to shattering.

Spring compaction is reduced because the dikes drain the furrows and cushion the impact of the tractor tires on the soil. A tractor tire never runs where the crop is to be planted.

MOISTURE ABSORPTION

Having the field bedded and diked during the winter, or the season when most of the precipitation occurs, eliminates run-off and erosion.

NATURE'S PLOW

The freezing and thawing of the tillage reservoirs loosens and heaves the beds. Freezing and thawing is one of nature's tools for loosening the soil. Clods are reduced and the soil is left mellower as a result.

SOIL WARMING

Bedding and diking can easily double the surface area of the soil, making a more efficient solar collector. Soil warms faster in the spring.

HEALTHY SOIL

The increased warming and increased surface area aid the microbial activity in the soil. Crop residue is digested more rapidly, seeds germinate earlier, and the crop canopy is achieved more rapidly.

EARLY ENTRY

The early warming of the soil, combined with the elimination of field wet spots and increased soil drainage, means an earlier entry into the field in the spring. This not only gets you started on the work early but gives the crop a head start as well.



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SEEDBED PREPARATION

The primary objective in preparing the seedbed for bedding is getting the crop residue broken up to the point that it will decompose more rapidly and can be handled by the tillage equipment. Behind grain crops, where the residue has been removed or is sparse, the bedding operation can often be done in the standing stubble. The Dammer Diker can handle a lot of trash. However, where residue is heavy, copping or multiple diskings may be required.

Some growers may prefer to do some cross-ripping to break up compaction layers or fumigate prior to the bedding operation. Generally, the bedding, bed-splitting in the spring, and Dammer Diking during the growing season, loosen the soil adequately for the crop. This is referred to as “incremental tillage,” and can be a money-saving factor in and of itself.



DAMMER DIKING

The implantation of the tillage reservoirs or Dammer Diking can be done prior to crop emergence or shortly thereafter. This operation should be done early to avoid root pruning.

FERTILIZATION

Dry pre-plant fertilizer is best applied in the fall, prior to bedding. However, if this is not possible, dry fertilizer can be applied prior to the spring bed splitting operation. The fertilizer must be spread with the rows; it will concentrate in the tillage reservoirs but will be moved into the hill and incorporated with the splitting operation.

A starter band can be applied with the planter or with the Dammer Diker. It is not suggested that a band be applied with the splitting operation because the band placement will be erratic. Other fertilizer needs can be met with applications of liquid nutrients with the irrigation water.

SPRING SPLITTING

To control the spring flush of weeds, many growers are reworking their beds in the spring. Shanks are added to the Dammer Diker or TillageMaster to split the beds down the center. The spiders are removed and replaced with mesh rollers and perhaps rod weeders to firm the beds. This operation kills the weeds and loosens the beds where the seed piece is to be placed. It also increases soil warming and drying. The roller firms and reseals the ground to prevent excessive drying. Bed splitting is normally done two weeks to ten days prior to planting.

