

Lovas Farms

NEWSLETTER | MARCH 2012

A BEAUTIFUL FALL

As you may recall, the August 2011 edition of our newsletter opened with a report about how wet and difficult last spring was for getting a crop planted. Well, the weather this fall turned out to be as pleasant as

anyone could have asked for. As difficult and trying as last spring was, this past fall's weather was cooperative and favorable for harvest, tillage, and planting.

FAST HARVEST....

As mentioned in the opening paragraph, fall weather was almost perfect, except for a killing frost we experienced in late September. Looking back, the frost helped the corn mature and dry down faster than anyone ever expected, but the soybeans, especially those that were seeded later, took quite a bit of damage, resulting in small seed size and reduced yields.



Damage to the Soybeans from the Early Frost

Soybean harvest went amazingly fast. We harvested 3,700 acres in nine and a half consecutive days. It was a joy managing bean harvest. Our equipment performed very well, and with the dry weather, we were able to finish fields once we started them, and were able to develop a plan and stick with it.

Corn harvest went very quickly, as well. We actually harvested corn for two days before starting soybeans. Combining any corn before soybeans is a rare occurrence and we chose this path because we wanted to give the soybeans a couple more days to get the green out of the stems. Plus, it gave us an opportunity to open a couple of corn fields and take off a test plot for our cooperative, Halstad Elevator Company.

Participating in test plots can be somewhat time-consuming due to the slow and tedious steps necessary to collect accurate information. Looking back, it worked out well, as our corn plot was the first to be taken off in the area. Because it was September, the moisture samples were still relatively high, in the 22-30% range. This was advantageous because it demonstrated how different varieties were drying down. Other corn plots were combined after soybean harvest, and all those varieties showed basically the same moisture, 14-15%, giving very little indication of which variety dried down the best.

After finishing soybean harvest, we jumped right into

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FAST HARVEST...(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

corn harvest and found all the corn to be basically dry. The crop was so dry, in fact, that we never even started the dryer this year, a very rare occurrence for a corn farmer, indeed! The weather was so warm during corn harvest that we never even had to plug in our trucks. This sharply contrasts to corn harvest of '08 and '09 when temps were so cold that even plugging trucks in wasn't enough to ensure they would start and run the next morning, mandating that we park everything inside the shop for the night. Trying to operate harvest equipment in bitter cold conditions really takes a toll on things. Any little weakness in your equipment shows up during cold weather, from keeping fuel from gelling up to air systems on trucks that aren't perfectly serviced, allowing moisture to freeze in air lines, and batteries that aren't at top operating efficiency. The list goes on and on. Warm weather offers a lot less opportunity for things to go wrong.

After corn harvest, and while the weather was still warm and dry, our attention quickly turned to applying fertilizer on the bean ground, working the bean and corn ground, improving surface drainage, and we even had time to take down four half-mile-long tree rows.

This past summer we updated our fertilizer spreading equipment with the purchase of a pull-type, spinner-style fertilizer spreader. Looking back on the progress of this last fall, we're happy with the results from this



Jason Fine-Tunes the Adjustments on the 7120 Combine and 16-row Cornhead

equipment upgrade. The spreader we have is easier to use and has a higher fertilizer capacity, making it an easier tool to utilize. The idea of a farmer owning their own fertilizer spreading equipment seems to be gaining popularity as our decreasing window of opportunity for getting timely field operations done mandates that farmers do these jobs themselves. Local co-ops and the like can't justify getting enough equipment to spread everyone's field in the same week. Another reason why owning a fertilizer spreader works well for us is our close proximity to Alton Agronomy, a wholesale fertilizer distributor adjacent to our farm. It's incredibly easy for us to get a semi filled with fertilizer and utilize that to tender our spreader in the field. Alton Agronomy and Alton Grain Terminal so close to our farm definitely add value as we try to quickly get through the busy seasons of spring and fall.



We Love the Precision Guidance of Auto Steer

SUMMER HAPPENINGS...

VISITORS

This summer we were fortunate to have two different groups of international visitors to our farm. The first, a group from Bolivia, have benefited from our involvement in Foods Resource Bank, a mission we participate in through our church. The people who visited



Pictured from left to right: Yangbo He, Kate Chambers, Sarah Lovas, Xeulian Bai

were farmers and agribusiness men from Bolivia. They were visiting the United States to see local farmers who have supported them through Foods Resource Bank. While here, they visited a couple of farms and gave a

presentation to our church explaining what life and agriculture are like in Bolivia, and specifically their area. It was an amazing and eye-opening experience.

The second group of visitors to Lovas Farms was Sarah's graduate student office mates, Yangbo He, Kate Chamber, and Xeulian Bai, as well as Xuelian's father from China. They came during spring wheat harvest so they could see how we harvest crops and were able to see our combines in action! It was fun answering questions they had about American agriculture because it reminds us of how different agriculture is around the world. Most groups of visitors are amazed at our wide-open, large fields, large machinery, and relative labor efficiency.

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR WINTER WHEAT

After spring wheat harvest, we focused our attention on winter wheat planting. Due to the tremendously wet spring, many fields in the area didn't get seeded. Planting winter wheat on those acres became a great

MORE ON FOODS RESOURCE BANK

The mission of Foods Resource Bank (FRB) is to end world hunger by globally connecting local communities through agriculture in order to raise funding and awareness. A Christian-based group, FRB engages volunteers to raise money for between 50 and 60 programs a year. All the programs focus on developing small-holder agriculture, often in the most remote and poorest regions of the world. FRB sees agriculture as the solution to hunger experienced in much of the world.

Lovas Farms donates the use of approximately 23 acres each year to Foods Resource Bank. We plant, harvest, and sell the crop, and the proceeds are used by FRB members to purchase food supplies, seed, and tools.

If you'd like more information about Foods Resource Bank, you can go online to www.foodsresourcebank.org.

alternative. We started planting winter wheat in the middle of September and finished up promptly, with no rain delays. We planted 190 acres of winter wheat on our land that did not get planted this spring and was drain tiled in June, and another 800 acres for other area farmers who were faced with the same wet spring conditions. Everyone was quite pleased with the winter wheat stands we were able to establish this fall; however, due to the open winter, there's a concern as to whether the winter wheat is going to survive until spring.



Our Fuel/Service Trailer Worked Really Well for All the Fall Activities

607 5TH AVE SE • HILLSBORO, ND 58045
SHOP LOCATION: 448 HIGHWAY 81 SE (1/2 MILE SOUTH OF ALTON GRAIN TERMINAL)

JASON P. LOVAS, 701-371-1272 • SARAH E.H. LOVAS, 701-866-1704 • PETER LOVAS, 701-430-0774

IN THE SHOP

As usual, when we're not in the field and during the off-season, the shop is busy. We started the winter going through all three of our chisel plows, replacing all shovels and some missing/broken hardware, and installing new bushings on two of them.

Tractors and combines continue to be serviced as well. Butler recently finished preventive maintenance on the Caterpillar tractors, and they should be ready to use for another year. Titan Machinery has gone through the newest of our combines, the 7120, but there is still one more to go through. The biggest job yet to tackle is the setup of our new 36-row, 22-inch planter, which we

traded for last summer. The new planter hasn't been delivered to our dealer, but once it is we will be responsible for some light setup of the planter itself. We will also be installing our own liquid fertilizer system. This will take some time to complete, but as long as it shows up in the next three to four weeks, we should have plenty of time to get it ready for spring.

This winter has also seen favorable weather. As of this writing, we have yet to move any snow with the payloader or the pickup plow. Snow removal has only resulted in clearing off the aprons in front of the shops two or three times.

CITY FOLKS?!

Another endeavor that has kept Jason and Sarah busy this winter is moving into a different home. In January, we bought a two-year-old house in Hillsboro. We have been struggling for a number of years as to the fate of our old house on the Post Farm, located SW of Hillsboro. We both absolutely loved the location and privacy of this farm, but struggled to decide whether the needed significant investment into the 100-plus-year house would be worth it in the long run. It was not an easy decision to say the least, but with historically low interest rates, coupled with the relatively soft housing market in Hillsboro, we felt it was more fiscally prudent to buy a house in Hillsboro for our short-term housing needs.

So far, we are really enjoying the conveniences of



Our New Home – 607 5th Avenue Southeast in Hillsboro
living in a nearly new house: low utility bills, warm rooms, windows that don't draft, proximity to businesses and church in Hillsboro. We are currently in the process of removing anything that is salvageable from our old home and will be taking the house down this spring. Our dreams might one day include building a house back out there, as we both loved the location and we both have a passion for returning one day.