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### Trash Treaders Help and Hurt

The use of trash treaders on summer-fallowed wheat ground can be helpful, but they also have some bad points, notes Dr. Darryl Smika, USDA agronomist, Akron, Colo.

Smika says that the treaders, pulled behind undercutters, knock down and destroy as much stubble—if not more—than the big blades themselves. Each pass through a field with bare blades destroys 10% to 12% of the stubble. "In addition, treaders tend to break up clods which help to control wind and water erosion," he points out.

Once the stubble has been knocked down and comes into contact with soil, it starts decomposing. "The net result is that you've got less stubble left over at planting time," he explains. "Consequently, you have less control over wind and water erosion during fall, winter, and spring, when erosion potentials are high."

Smika explains that trash treaders help to level soil and distribute it and crop residues evenly behind undercutter blades. He says, "During wet springs, there is an advantage to pulling treaders behind the blades because they'll help give better weed control in moist soil conditions."

Smika notes that the most valuable position of wheat stubble is when it is standing erect. "In this position, it slows wind velocities at the soil surface and provides shade for the ground. This adds up to less evaporation and higher wheat yields."

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