Anhydrous after wheat harvest?

Farmers looking for ways to stretch their nitrogen during dry weather might want to apply anhydrous ammonium immediately after cutting wheat—a full 14 to 15 months ahead of planting their next crop.

Dr. Darryl Smika, USDA agronomist, Akron, points out that the main advantage of an early application of anhydrous is that later fall and winter precipitation will gradually pull some of the nitrogen down into the soil profile.

"This is important because as the plant withdraws moisture from the soil, it also be withdrawing nitrogen—regardless from where in the profile the water is coming from. If, however, the nitrogen were applied in the last tillage operation prior to planting, the nitrogen might be concentrated in the top 6 inches of soil. Then when that dried out, the nitrogen would be unavailable to the crop," Smika says.

Smika says in studies in eastern Colorado, they've found that early post harvest anhydrous application always produced wheat yields as good as and sometimes better than applications at other times.

"But it's never produced lower yields than when anhydrous was applied the next summer prior to planting," he says.

He notes, though, that he'd restrict the early anhydrous application to semi-arid cli-