

California FARMER MARKETPLACE EXTRA

Farm Equipment • General • Real Estate • Auctions • Poultry/Livestock to meet all your needs!

Computers take reins of machinery training



By WILLIE VOGT

FARMERS are jacks of all trades. The amount of knowledge it takes to keep a successful operation going boggles the mind, but it also means you have to keep current on a lot of information. But what happens when you do something once a year, then walk away for 11 months? Will you remember all the finer points of how to perform that task? Will you know the best way to tune a specific machine for just the right result? With the investment most farmers have in new equipment, making the most of that machine is important.

Those are questions major equipment makers are tackling now, and it means you may have more tools to get the job done in the future. In some cases, it begins at the dealer level — perhaps a dealer university where parts, sales and service technicians can take classes right in the dealership; and these ideas are moving on to customers.

Case IH recently launched two new electronic learning, or “e-learning,” programs that focus on combine setup and operation. The aim is to make you better at what you do when running the machine at harvest, and also to help you set it up for best performance every time.

Key Points

- Equipment firms offer training help with electronic tools.
- Studying the inner workings of a machine aids performance.
- Wide range of training help will be offered in the near future.

The first program, called Fundamentals of the Combine, is Combine Basics 101 and is probably not suited for experienced operators.

“That’s a course for a novice to a combine, or perhaps for a secondary-school ag program where students want to learn about the basic operation of the machine,” says Dan Renaud, cash-crop training specialist for Case IH.

This is definitely the combine basics course that includes the history of harvesters and various machine designs, in-

cluding single-rotor, twin-rotor and conventional approaches, Renaud says.

Stepping up for the pros

An experienced combine operator can still get it wrong, notes Renaud. “Sometimes you’ll make what sounds like a correct setting — as an example, loosening the concaves for a particular situation — but if you exceed the optimum setting, this may mangle the grain and the MOG [material other than grain],” he notes. “And that looser concave might produce more tailings, prompting you to adjust the tailing setting only to be working at the wrong end of the process.”

To handle that, most farmers with combine experience would check out the second course offered: Theory of Combine Settings and Adjustment. Renaud says that

the whole idea for the course came about because there were a lot of people in the company who had good setup and operational knowledge. There was a need to get that information into one place.

“This course probably has more than 300 combined years of combine operating experience included for the user,” he notes.

Renaud says understanding the “material flow” of combine operation will be easier with this program, and users will do a better job of setting up their machines for optimal performance.

“We’re creatures of habit, and often we do what we did in the past, when that may not work in the current harvest,” he notes. “This course is designed to help people understand how adjustments affect a combine both in a positive and negative way.”

Crops change from year to year, Renaud notes. In fact, genetics change from year to year and that can bring more opportunities, too. “You really need to better understand material flow and control to properly make adjustments.”

These two programs are currently available on CD, rather than online. Renaud says that eliminates worries with a person’s ability to have good Internet access.

“The combine simulator begins with the combine in its optimum setting, but the user can make various adjustments and see how different adjustments can impact the machine,” says Renaud.



PUTTING TOOLS TO WORK: Growers who like to see combines at work during farm shows can do more than that with new electronic training tools offered by equipment firms.

Case tests e-learning

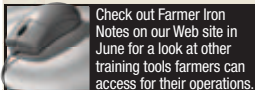
LEO Bose, cash-crop training manager, Case IH, notes that the company takes a number of approaches to distributing electronic-learning, or “e-learning,” tools.

“We’re taking small steps with this and trying several things,” he says. “In this case, we went with the CD disk approach. The dealer can have the CD disk for the farmer to check out, or the farmer can buy the program.”

Bose notes that Case IH is working on a number of training tools that can help improve a user’s ability to maximize the performance of a machine. He explains that some of these tools start out as training aids for dealers where they can receive “dealer standards credit” for taking a specific course. Longer term, there will be more tools for customers, too.

“We’re looking at such programs as Basics of Agronomy and Plant Stand Management, especially with our tillage and planting product lines,” Bose says. “Some competitors are offering more of these tools online, often for their dealers, too.”

Equipment is getting more complicated as it gets more productive. Add in the need for a single person to run larger equipment to cover more acres, and farmers will require more detailed information for equipment operation. A machine worth six figures has to be productive for a farm, and enhanced training can help.



Check out Farmer Iron Notes on our Web site in June for a look at other training tools farmers can access for their operations.

Find GROUNDWATER

- Thickness, quality, depth
- 2D aquifer-imaging technology
- Survey from the surface; no boreholes
- Locate your best water source



Stratatek Groundwater Imaging • 1-800-401-9092

STOKES LADDERS

aluminum – all sizes



STOKES LADDERS INC.

P.O. BOX 445 • KELSEYVILLE, CA 95451

1-800-842-7775

info@stokesladders.com



Manage on the go...