The Past

The history of the farm prior to low disturbance direct seeding consisted of a traditional winter wheat, summer fallow rotation. This was done not by fall tillage, but any cultivation was done in the spring and summer. There has been no deep tillage for over 20 years on this farm.

The annual rainfall average for our farm is 10 to 11 inches per year. We have been in a drought in this region for the past 5 years. On our farm we received 6.87 inches of moisture from April 1, 2003 until harvest 2004.

We have tried over 14 different crops in our rotations.

We started transitioning into direct seeding in 1996, using a John Deere 750 drill.

The Present

We have moved to a minimum disturbance drill (Great Plains).
Rotation is now down to 5 crops;
   a. hard red wheat - winter and spring varieties
   b. soft white wheat – winter and spring varieties
   c. safflower
   d. alfalfa
   e. perennial grasses

We have included cattle in our farming business.

Yields are on the decline. This is due to the lack of moisture and a severe compaction problem. The compaction starts at the 4 to 5 inch level and this compaction layer is about 8 inches thick. We started a minimum disturbance ripping program this fall.

The Future

We have found in the past 3 years that winter wheat after chemical fallow is yielding very well. At this time chem. fallow will be a big part of our rotation.

Deep ripping will be a part of the farming practice (possibly every 3 to 4 years) until the compaction problem is eliminated.

We will continue to try to find crops that are suitable for a low rainfall direct seed system and that are marketable. This would include new varieties of wheat.