

# Tire Inflation Pressure

*by Matt Hagny, consulting agronomist for no-till systems since '94.*

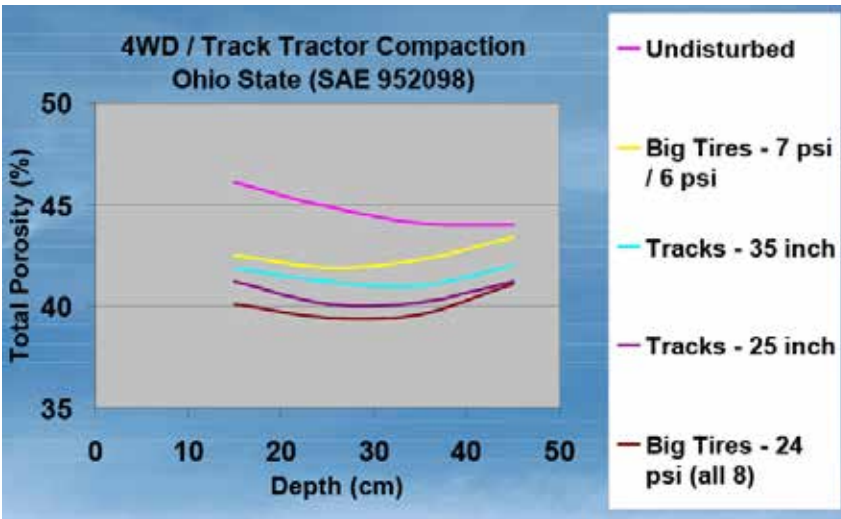


Some of you are faced with harvest activities on very damp to muddy soils. Check your tire pressures! This is a zero cost way to A) reduce compaction, B) improve flotation, and C) improve fuel economy on radial tires. Remember, just because it arrived from the dealership at a certain inflation pressure doesn't mean it's right!



Get yourself a good dial gauge if you don't already have one, and check the readings in the morning (and be cognizant of which side is in the sun, which can result in a couple psi higher). As air temps rise, so will inflation pressures. If you're uncertain of how low you can go with a set of tires, have your tire vendors (not the machinery dealer) look it up -- although older tires (5+ yrs) that have gotten stiff may not do well at the lowest settings. Conversely, new tires often can go lower than spec'd. And, if you're about due for new tires, the newer IF & VF technology is wonderful -- it often lets you go 40% lower air pressure than standard radials (VF stands for "Very Flexible" sidewall). No need to change rims, just buy VF in the same size. -- Although in many cases, you really do need to go to bigger tire sizes: Today's combines and tractors have just gotten way too heavy, and it's squeezing the life out of our soils. Not to mention it might take years to correct itself, but only when you stop squeezing it.

I'll go into tire options (and tracks) in the next newsletter, as well as prioritizing which machinery to focus on, and setting some goals for pressures exerted on the soil (and, no, tracks aren't always as good as you think). For now, just make sure you've gone to the lowest recommended tire inflation pressures.



This illustrates how critical it is to properly adjust your tire pressure. The same tires here were both the best, and worst, depending on inflation pressure. This was a study conducted in the early 1990s and is still valid today.