

# Growers Must Manage For Higher Seed To Seedling Ratio



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**R**ice planting is now well underway for the Mid-South, and so far 2010 has proven to be a bit more relaxed than last season. Reports of drills running and earlier planted fields emerging should let everyone sleep easier at night than this time

a year ago.

No matter how stressful the early season is, there are a couple things every rice grower should know and do between planting and midseason.

First and foremost, is establishing a usable stand. With RiceTec hybrids, an optimal stand will be in the range of 8-10 plants per square foot. As we all know, early season field conditions and weather can sometimes hinder establishing optimal stands. While hybrids are managed the same as varietal rice for stand establishment, the lower seeding rates when compared

to varieties means the grower needs to manage for a higher seed to seedling ratio. RiceTec standard seed treatments of multiple fungicides, gibberellic acid, and Zinc enhance early growth opportunity for seedlings, and the addition of optional insecticide seed treatments may further increase stand establishment.

After the seed is planted, it is up to the grower to work with the environment to manage what Mother Nature brings. Inadequate moisture after germination or too much moisture can be devastating to any rice crop by producing uneven emergence or lack of emergence – both of which will increase costs and possibly decrease yields. A couple of points to follow:

- If the soil is crusted, or dry enough around the seed that emergence will be delayed, flush the field.

- If water is standing in the field, even small potholes, drain it. Seedlings cannot emerge through soil and water.

When growing RiceTec hybrids, fields with stands of 5 plants per square foot evenly distributed across the field have produced yields not significantly different than fields with optimal stands. However, if stand counts are taken and are less than 7, trial data has proven that applying starter fertilizer and flushing will help increase early season growth and tillering. Also, if there are any sprouted seed that are having trouble with emergence, the flush will aid in

loosening the soil surface, allowing them to fully emerge. It seems that most of the time “flush” is considered a four-letter word, but it can make the difference between establishing a stand and replanting – delaying harvest and decreasing yield potential.

Secondly, something every rice grower has heard so many times they could recite it, is the need for good early season weed control, especially when growing CLEARFIELD rice. Always read and follow label instructions, and be sure to follow the Stewardship Guidelines BASF has published.



We often get the question “Which is better, applying the first shot of Newpath PPI, or POST, at the 1-2 leaf stage?” The answer is that it comes down to grower preference. Both ways work well. We prefer POST applications; we have seen a slight advantage in red rice control this way. Sometimes, in cases like last year, the weather really doesn’t help in trying to apply Newpath either way, but shooting for a PPI application might take some pressure off later if the weather does not cooperate.

Lastly, be thinking about your herbicide program. As you have read and heard, many popular rice herbicides are in the ALS family. Using nothing but ALS herbicides are showing signs of having a rice farmer in a bind in just a few short years. If you are not already, consider using other chemistries to help spread the load that has been put on the ALS family. While we don’t make direct herbicide recommendations, using product such as or similar to Command, Prowl, Stam, and Bolero or RiceBeaux will help spread the selection pressure in your fields. Keep in mind that we are all in this boat together, and everyone should do their part in keeping our current herbicides effective.

Good luck on your early season management!

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