

Fall tillage helps weeds

With harvest well under way in Louisa County many local farmers will start fall tillage. This fall tillage could increase weed populations next spring according to ISU weed scientist Mike Owen.

About 60 percent of most weed seeds will survive a winter if buried under eight inches of soil. But if seeds are left on the surface of the soil, up to 90 percent won't survive. "That alone is a good argument against fall plowing," says Owen.

"This is well documented," Owen said. "When you turn the seeds under, this places them in dormancy. It just

puts them in the seed bank." Left on the soil surface with plant residue, many of the seeds will rot or be infected by disease, Owen said.

With the dry conditions this year, fall tillage will really destroy residue. "About 75 percent of Louisa County farmers have some kind of residue management system written into their Conservation Plan," said Shawn Dettmann, District Conservationist for the local SCS. Many of the plans have conservation tillage scheduled for next year. With the short crop and dry conditions this fall it will be difficult for people to meet the residue levels in the farm plan if fall tillage is done.