“Without the relief angle, you potentially increase drag on the reels or increase the likelihood of metal-to-metal contact,” Sides said. “This puts more strain on the entire tractor and generates more heat in the hydraulic or electrical systems.”

In addition to adding wear to the unit as a whole, this additional strain can also start to have a negative impact on fuel economy.

“Drag, wear and heat are minimized with a relief angle and proper bedknife clearances,” Sides said.

The proper angles for reels can generally be found in manufacturer’s manuals.

How often to grind is another question Sides is frequently asked. While there is no hard and fast rule, this is a major factor that a lot of folks overlooked.

“How often and how heavy you topdress will dictate how often you’ll need to grind,” he said. “The more sand that goes down, the more frequently you’ll have to grind.”

One way to extend reel life and still aggressively topdress is to make sure the sand gets worked in well before mowing. Brushing or dragging will help keep the sand down at the root level where it belongs and not up eroding the reels on your mowers.

LAY OUT A GRINDING SCHEDULE

Finally, Sides recommends setting up a grinding schedule. This will help ensure that units are taken care of regularly as well as allow turf managers to plan enough time to get the job done.

“Too often, we see reels get overlooked because there’s just no time to grind,” Sides said.

This schedule should be flexible, however, to deal with changing conditions. For example, a change in the topdressing program should lead to a review of the grinding schedule.

“Most people go too long between grinds,” Sides said. “Having an established timeline helps keep reels in optimum mowing condition.”