

Summer Grain Storage Requires Management

UNIVERSITY PARK — Many corn producers involved with the federal acreage reduction program will face storing shelled corn through the summer for the first time. Although grain producers usually have sold their crops by this time of the year, many of those in the USDA program agreed to store the corn until autumn.

"Producers who have never stored grain through the summer need to know that grain management requires some action," says Jon Carson, assistant

professor of agricultural engineering at The Pennsylvania State University.

Carson says that producers should maintain grain corn temperature within 15 to 20 degrees F of the daily average outdoor air temperature. The rule of thumb is that grain should be warmed as the ambient temperature increases. "If the grain maintains a significantly cooler temperature than the surrounding air," he explains, "there is a risk of spoilage from a moisture imbalance."

Grain temperature can be controlled in the grain bins with drying or aeration fans. Start moving air with the fans when the average daily air temperature is 10-15 degrees above the grain temperature. Run the fans continuously until the warming front has moved through the grain. The front can be detected by measuring the temperature of the air exiting the grain.

The amount of time required to warm the grain will depend on the fan capacity available. If the storage has one cfm (cubic feet per

minute) of fan capacity per bushel of grain, it should take approximately 12 hours to warm the grain. Capacity of 1/10 cfm per bushel should take 120 hours.

However, Carson warns producers not to warm the grain to high summer temperatures. "Try to stop warm-up at grain temperatures of 50 to 60 F. If the grain is warmed more than necessary it will overdry and the weight available for sale will be reduced." The moisture content of the corn need only be reduced to 13 to 14 percent to minimize the risk of spoilage.

Carson recommends checking the grain weekly to detect any potential problems by pushing your arm full length into the grain to grab a sample. Check for warm spots and then smell the exhaust air from the fans to check for musty odors. To check quality, remove a sample from the bottom of the bin using the unloading auger. If there are any signs of excess moisture or heating, run the fans continuously until the symptoms cannot be detected.

When working with stored grain corn, always be careful around grain handling equipment. Never enter a bin where grain is flowing.

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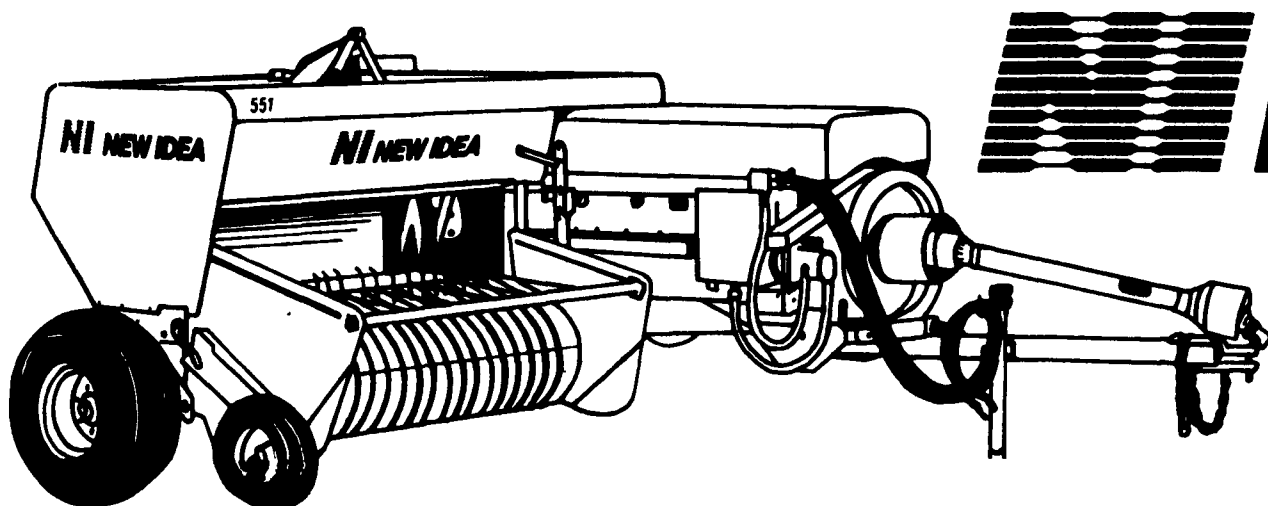
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