

Corn Talk News RESEARCH UPDATE



HARVEST UNDER WAY

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Another corn harvest season is upon us and it is time to plan accordingly.

This year we have a good crop and reasonable prices, so it will be particularly important to do a careful job when harvesting to capture the yield and preserve the quality of the crop that we have in the field. A number of issues will be important to consider in harvesting this year's crop.

For many farms, this year's crop will be large, so plans should be made now for storing

and marketing the crop. Hopefully most producers have considered this before now and have plans in place. Field scouting should also be completed now and those fields with potential standability problems should be harvested first.

During the last two weeks, I visited a number of fields that had gray leaf spot that could contribute to poor standability. To assess standability, squeeze the stalk to check to stalk integrity. Fields with stalks that crush easily will likely have the most standability problems.

Another problem to scout for are ear molds. In a few fields, bird damage and wet weather

have contributed to sporadic ear mold problems. Planning to harvest these fields early, preferably for shelled corn. Removing the fines and cobs will help to reduce the potential for mold problems in feed.

Crop maturity is key situation to monitor this fall. Some fields that were planted late will be at risk to mature before frost. Grain development should be monitored and if the crop will not reach the dent stage by frost then a silage or high moisture ear corn harvest option should be considered because of the potential for low test weights and slow dry down.

High moisture earlage is a good option for immature corn since the cobs will contribute to the yield and at higher moisture contents are digested well by ruminants. The exception to this would be when the cob and grains show signs of mold. Then, harvesting as high moisture shelled corn has been shown to reduce potential mold and mycotoxin contamination.

Monitoring crop moisture is essential to maintain the quality of the high moisture corn or ear corn in storage. Common mistakes are for high moisture corn

to be harvested too dry and ear corn to be harvested too wet.

In general, high moisture shelled corn should be greater than 26 percent moisture except in sealed silos, where it should be greater than 22 percent for adequate storage. Ear corn should preferably at 21 percent grain moisture or less, but can be stored slightly wetter if stored in narrow bins or bins with air drying capability.

When storing high moisture corn, remember to fill fast, pack well, and seal well. Avoid leaving loads out overnight or, worse, making piles of wet corn that will not be ensiled quickly. Slow filling can cause the crop to heat before the ensiling process starts. Heating reduces the

quality of the feed and allows yeasts and molds to proliferate. This causes layers in the silo that will be lower quality and will spoil more readily during feedout. Warm temperatures during silo filling will make wet corn heat and spoil more quickly.

While harvesting, also note harvest losses. The rule of thumb for harvest losses is that 20 kernels in a ten square foot area represents 1 bushel per acre. Ear corn losses can be estimated by counting the dropped ears in a 1/100th acre row length (two 30-inch rows 87 feet long). Each full size ear in this sample area represents one bushel per acre.



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