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**June 6, 2014**

## **ASSESSING HAIL DAMAGED CROPS**

It was an unbelievable week with hail damage in Wilber and the surrounding area. I have never had windows break out of a home before and now have experienced how unnerving that is to deal with. But we still had our homes and spared from severe structural damage. While Wilber residents were placing plywood over all the broken windows, farmers in a large area of Saline County were trying to early assess hail damage to wheat, corn and beans.

Just as homeowners wait to hear from insurance adjusters to move forward, farmers wait to hear from insurance providers to determine what will be allowed for replant options and settlement issues. There are so many acres that were damaged in Nebraska to hail with these storms, the key is getting the proper insurance guidelines to move forward.

On the positive side, we have time to add to soybean stands. When looking at some of the soybeans in the Dorchester area last Thursday afternoon near the Weber Feedyard, the standing population of soybeans that had clean, green stems in a particular field was only in the 35,000 to 55,000 range. The hailstone marks in the soil and the stem damage near the soil surface reminded you of the force of this storm.

Unlike corn plants, which have one growing point, soybean plants have many growing points located at the base of each leaf. As long as these growing points are not injured, new growth can occur from any point. There are no growing points below the cotyledons. A plant cut or seriously injured below this point is done. I have learned over the years not to use beans with significant stem damage in the stand counts. Adding to the stand looks very feasible and that window to slot in some more soybeans will come soon unless additional rain delays planting soybeans.

Stand counts on corn were all across the board depending on the field. I saw fields that had expected stand counts of 6,000, 12,000, 18,000 and 25,000, but two days after the storm was still too early to tell for sure what final counts will be. Crop stage played a key role as corn with 7 leaves corn had the growing point almost 2 inches above the soil surface and corn that was 5 leaves had the growing point about 3/4 inch above the soil line. If plants broke over below the growing point, those are done.

One issue with this particular storm is kinked-over plants will sometimes entrap the growing point and normal growth is altered. Some plants may be "tied" or "crippled" as the leaves fail to expand in a normal manner from the whorl. Since it cannot be determined until much later whether or not these crippled plants will develop normally, when taking stand counts they are routinely not counted. UNL studies have shown using a shredder is not a good option to try to eliminate this problem.

Replanting corn June 10 to June 15 with a final irrigated stand of 35,000 plants per acre, yield could be about 54% of a similar stand planted in late April to early May on average, plus there may be dry down issues. On the other hand, if you planted in late April to early May and hail reduced corn populations to 20,000 plants per acre, yield potential would be around 89%. Keeping what you have is often the best option with corn unless stand counts are extremely low. Herbicides also play a key role and whether cropping change is an option and insurance company options that are in the policy for the type of coverage you have. For more resources with assessing hail damage, go to [cropwatch.unl.edu](http://cropwatch.unl.edu).

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