

Fall Harvest Challenges

Dryland corn harvest this fall could pose several challenges or opportunities. It is likely that some of the corn harvested is going to be light test weight corn. This will result in discounts at the marketplace. Discounts start below 54 or 56 pounds per bushel. Feed value would only be less for corn with test weights below 42 pounds per bushel. This poses a problem or an opportunity for farmers. A problem if the corn is sold at the discount. An opportunity if the light test weight corn is binned and fed, while the irrigated corn is sold on the market. Let's take that a step further for livestock producers who need to buy corn. There could be an opportunity to purchase corn with excellent feed value at a lower cost.

Low test weight corn and drought damaged corn silage usually will have a 1-1.5% increase in protein content which can save on protein additives needed in the ration. Dr. Ivan Rush, University of Nebraska Beef Specialist has conducted trials on feeding light test weight corn. In his trials, rations using 49#/bu corn and 45#/bu corn showed equal dry matter intake, equal gain per day, and equal feed conversion to corn at 56#/bu corn. There can be a bit of a challenge in processing the grain. The rollers need to be tightened down so all the grain is cracked. If test weights are real light, this can create more fines.

Dryland corn harvest this fall could pose a real challenge if we get rain and/or lots of dew and higher humidity levels prior to harvest. The drought damaged grain is more likely to harbor mold growth including possible alfatoxins. In general the threat of alfatoxins can create more discounts in grain price than are warranted. It takes time for elevators to get tests run to confirm or deny the presence of these toxins. If they mix grains it could cost them lots of money in discounting large volumes of grain. The only thing a producer can do is stay calm, don't spread rumors, avoid sales when concerns are rampant, and bin corn affected for home use if possible. It would be an extremely rare situation for alfatoxins or other molds to be of concern for livestock feeds in our area.

Producers marketing corn for milling or for human food uses may well encounter problems with marketing both on account of light test weight and molds. For the same reasons we talked about in processing livestock feed, millers are challenged by light test weight grain. Where they are producing grain products meeting exacting specifications, the light test weight presents some real challenges. They will avoid purchase if possible.

Caution and care will be needed in filling bins uniformly and in operation of any drying or aeration equipment. The risk of fire is elevated if fine materials accumulate and block proper airflow. Fine buildup can also increase heating, mold growth, and insect potential in stored grain. Taking a load or two out of a bin after filling helps to level the top and remove fines from the middle of the bin and increases the effectiveness of aeration.

Paul C Hay, Extension Educator

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Gage County • 1115 West Scott Street, Beatrice NE 68310
(402) 223-1384 • FAX: (402) 223-1370 • email: phay1@unl.edu



University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.. Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.