

---

## Harvest Handling Tips

At this time we can see what faces us in this harvest season. One look in a dryland corn field at the stalks going down shows us the potential for real problems. Combining down stalks with light test weights and molds will not be fun. Milo fields look better in terms of yields, but stalk rot in milo is closely tied to soil temperatures. Soil temperatures on bare soil in mid-August were over 90 degree

HERE ARE SOME TIPS producers can use to minimize further income losses:

▶▶ Combine settings are important to get the grain (even some of the lighter test weight grain), while leaving the fines and unfilled kernels in the field. Seed coats on this grain are likely to be thin and checks and cracks from extra combine threshing action should be avoided. Review your cylinder settings and vein adjustments (rotatory) with the book and your dealer. It is easy to plug headers with downed stalks even when they aren't all that thick. Make sure that all systems are shut down and safety locks in place before cleaning out plugs. After cleaning make sure all tools and clean-out equipment is put away before restart. Make sure helpers are in a safe place before restarting equipment.

▶▶ Start bin fans as soon as filling begins. Evening the temperature and moving moisture fronts can't start too quick on this grain, which will likely have plenty of fines. As soon as filling is complete level bins. This may need to be done several times for crop insurance measurements. Be sure you have safety rope and help with cell phone at hand when going up, down, or into bins. Take two loads of feed or grain for sale out of full bins. This helps in leveling and gets fines out of the bin center for improved air flow.

▶▶ Run aeration fans for at least 72 hours after filling and leveling are completed. This insures uniform temperature and moisture in the stored grain. Repeat this as outside temperatures drop (about once a month). If the in-laws are troublesome, use Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas for grain aeration dates. Communications with the wife may suffer, but the grain will be safe!

▶▶ If the season suddenly turns moist, drying may be needed. Drying light test weight grain is more challenging than milo. Use lower temperatures, monitor the dryer carefully, and use frequent full dryer cleanouts to be sure the fines don't buildup and catch fire. It will be very easy to over-dry this grain and cause extra stress cracks.

▶▶ TAKE YOUR TIME! It is frustrating to get low yields and have to combine short soybean plants. Make sure you don't compound the problem by leaving 5 bushels/acre in the field or on the side damaging the header on terraces or sucking rocks into the machine. Grain prices are going higher and we still need to harvest as much of a good clean crop as possible.

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](mailto:phay1@unl.edu)

