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# Cornbelt Update

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- **Farmers with crops still in the field**, who will be unable to complete harvest by December 10, need to alert their crop insurance agent about their situation. That date ends your insurance coverage period, but harvest still must be completed to gauge how much grain was produced, so that any indemnity payment for the weather can be made. Standard policies cover quality losses due to test weight, foreign material and mold. IA economist William Edwards says drying costs due to the weather are not covered. More: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/articles/edwards/EdwNov09.html>
- **Any crop insurance claim** must be accompanied by good records on crop yields and fields according to IA economist Stephen Johnson. He says your goal should be proving actual dry weight yields for each farm or crop insurance unit. Read his fact sheet at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/articles/others/JohNov09.html>
  - 1) Contact your crop insurance representative as soon as possible to report a loss.
  - 2) Keep detailed field records with number of loads, harvest date, weight and moisture.
  - 3) Keep scale tickets by unit or farm name; mark level of grain placed in every bin.
  - 4) Do not co-mingle 2008 crops with 2009 crops, unless an adjustor measures the bin.
  - 5) Keep records of grain taken from the bin for livestock feed purposes
- **If you have moldy corn in storage**, there will be extra time, labor, and frustration in dealing with it. IA grain specialist Charles Hurburgh offers his expert opinions:
  - 1) If the corn is below 20%, natural air/low temperature drying can handle it.
  - 2) Low volume aeration only will cool it but move it during the winter or dry later.
  - 3) Corn wetter than 20% will have to be dried further and should not be in piles.
  - 4) Maintain continuous airflow and steadily move this corn to heated air drying.
  - 5) Check often on grain which is heating and crusting so it can be moved or turned.
  - 6) Some corn will be lost to mold through both physical shrink and damaged kernels.
  - 7) Corn that is low in test weight means that its storage potential is poor.
- **If you have dry grain in storage**, Hurburgh says take care of it. "Remove the center core of bins and re-level. Be able to monitor temperature and progressively drop the temperature as the outside air temperatures fall. All grain should get to 35°F or lower. It is acceptable to freeze corn as long the grain is clean so that chunks do not form. Cold grain needs headspace ventilation fans to control condensation in the spring."

- **It is probably no surprise**, but the longer your corn stands in the field, the greater the chance for ear molds and mycotoxin issues. That is the observation of OH plant pathologist Pierce Paul, who says the only way you can really tell is to have the grain tested for contamination. And he says even if it has mold, it may not have toxins. His concern is with gibberella which produces vomitoxin, zearalenone, and T-2 toxin.
- **Toxins in corn** can impact its eventual use. The removal of starch in the ethanol process means that the DDGS will have three times the amount of toxin that it initially had. Harvesting the corn for silage will not reduce the mycotoxin level, since Paul says vomitoxin is heat stable and water soluble, and should not be fed over 5 parts per million.
- **If you had corn ear rots** or white mold in soybeans, decide now that you don't want to see a repeat in 2010, recommends Purdue plant pathologist Kiersten Wise. Her plan is:
  - 1) Select hybrids or soybean varieties that have some level of resistance to the molds.
  - 2) Consider 30 in. rows, avoid high plant populations in soybeans were molds occurred.
  - 3) Reduce corn molds by rotating out of corn, and break up residue with tillage.
- **Choose hybrids based on field history**, says Purdue specialist Wise. She adds, "If there are fields with a history of certain diseases, we recommend choosing hybrids or varieties with resistance to those diseases. Also, take into account production practices. If a grower is in a no-till or reduced tillage, continuous corn system, there is an increased risk of disease development, since many corn diseases survive from year to year in crop residue. We might recommend choosing a more defensive hybrid for those acres."
- **It may be unavoidable**, but soil compaction from a wet harvest may reduce yields next year. OH soil engineer Randall Reeder says, "Research has shown that compaction affects crop yields. Years of OSU Extension research on Hoytville silty clay loam showed that through compaction, 10 – 15% of the potential crop yield was being left in the field. To counteract yield losses from compaction, researchers recommend no-till production. Recent research shows that continuous no-till soil resists compaction from heavy loads better than soil that is subsoiled every three years, resulting in higher yields."
- **If you have not yet planted wheat**, OH crop specialist Pierce Paul says the first week of November is considered the drop dead date. He says this is a high risk time for planting wheat, and it may still do well if it gets in the ground and if we have a mild winter. Paul says the problem is the lack of tiller development before dormancy.
- **It is not too early to begin** your weed control program for 2010, says Purdue weed specialist Bill Johnson. He says priorities ought to be on marestalk, giant ragweed, common ragweed, common waterhemp and volunteer Roundup Ready corn is soybeans. Johnson says each field should be managed as if it contains its own set of problems. He says every year there will be a variation in problems due to crop rotation.
- **The latest soybean aphid analysis** is good news. Purdue entomologist Christian Krupke reports, "With no males observed and no green soybeans remaining for them to develop on, the chance of having many fertilized eggs seems very low. We expect low numbers of aphids on buckthorn in the spring, and relatively low spring populations on soybeans. This is good news for producers this coming spring. We will confirm with an April 2010 visit to the buckthorn sites to see how the eggs did and post an update then."

- **With winter survival at 100%**, sampling for soybean cyst nematodes this fall will tell how many SCN you will have in your soybean fields next year. IL nematologist Terry Niblack says take a sample every 10 acres, and it should be composed of 20-30 sub-samples taken from soil at the 8-10 in. depth. Have a qualified lab analyze it.
- **If your 2010 soybean fields** will have higher populations of SCN than when they were last sampled, Niblack says reduce your yield loss with a simple risk management plan:
  - 1) Rotate the field with a non-host crop such as corn or alfalfa.
  - 2) Rotate with SCN-resistant soybean varieties listed at: [www.vipsoybeans.org](http://www.vipsoybeans.org) .
  - 3) Rotate resistant varieties, and never grow the same resistant variety twice in that field.
  - 4) If you are unsure if your SCN population is increasing, start sampling this year.
- **Soybean varieties** which obtain SCN resistance from PI88788 genetics, may have different yield results, says OH specialist Anne Dorrance. She says, “The resistance in PI88788 for SCN comes from 5-6 different genes. In each new variety they all have the main gene, but they also have a different set of the additional genes. This is why one variety with PI88788 may give better control to SCN in one field but not in another. It is key then to rotate varieties with SCN resistance keep SCN guessing.”
- **There was a 141% increase** this year in the number of US counties that had confirmed cases of Asian soybean rust. USDA’s soybean rust website: [www.sbrusa.net](http://www.sbrusa.net) indicates it was found in 554 counties in the US, plus 3 states and 9 municipalities in Mexico. That compares to 392 counties during the 2008 soybean growing season.
- **Climate change legislation** will not be considered in the US Senate this fall but IL economist Madhu Khanna believes the proposed Cap and Trade system will result in \$8 to \$13 billion in benefits for agriculture, based on a \$30 per ton price for carbon that farmers could bury in the soil in return for payments from carbon emitting companies.
- **In addition to no-till agriculture**, installation of methane digesters in livestock facilities would qualify farmers for the carbon offsetting payments from entities, says IL economist Khanna. However, agriculture can expect to pay higher prices for fuel and fertilizer, as a result of the expected carbon emissions from energy use taxes.
- **Can you break even with hogs** in 2010? While many lenders will be asking that of pork producers, Purdue livestock economist Chris Hurt says it depends on the futures contract used to hedge. He says the live hog contract leaves a \$10 per head loss, but the lean hog contract suggests a \$50.50 farm level price in 2010 and the chance to break even.
- **Lenders may be better off** to work with producers says Hurt, because swine barns have little liquidation value at this time. He says most lenders want hog operations to cover cash outflow, but market prices are not robust enough to also cover overhead. Hurt says the lender may be better off to work with the producer if they do not worsen their financial position over the next year, since buildings may have more value in a year.
- **“Old timers”** quoted by Purdue’s Hurt say, “You don’t want to be short lean hog futures when the price cycle is ready to turn up,” and that has been true in the past. When prices turned up, they tended to go much higher than anticipated, providing handsome rewards to those who stayed unsold on hogs. But Hurt says old maxims may not hold in a new era. Read more: <http://www.farmdoc.illinois.edu/marketing/weekly/html/112309.html> .

- **Beef exports** for Sept. were 20% below those of Sept. 2008, and beef imports were down nearly 5% from 2008. For the first 9 months of the year, exports were down 6.4% and imports were up 10.3%, both compared to the same period of 2008. MO economists Grimes and Ron Plain say Mexican feeder calf imports were up 37% from 2008.
- **Pork exports** were up nearly 4% in Sept. compared to year earlier numbers, but pork imports were up more than 16% from Sept. of 2008, with increases from all major pork exporting countries. MO livestock economist Glenn Grimes says net pork exports as a percent of production declined from 17.42% in 2008 to 14.07% in 2009 for January-September. Canadian imports for Jan-Sept were down 33% from that 2008 period. Grimes says August surprisingly will be the low water mark for 2009 pork prices.
- **Swine health has improved** for hogs moved to indoor feeding facilities. MO swine veterinarian Beth Young analyzed health records back to 1945, and reported:
  - 1) In the 1940's, lungworms affected 55-70% of pigs, but are now rarely seen.
  - 2) In the 1940's kidney worms affected 78-94% of pigs, but are now rarely seen.
  - 3) Trichinella and toxoplasma cases have dramatically dropped in recent decades.
  - 4) Toxoplasma affected 42% of sows in the 1970's, but that has dropped to 6%.
  - 5) Swine dysentery, atrophic rhinitis, actinobacillus pleuropneumoniae, brucellosis, classical swine fever (hog cholera) and pseudorabies cases have dropped dramatically.
- **Flash fires and explosions** have been occurring in swine barns when liquid manure is being pumped from pits. IL ag engineer Ted Funk says the agitation of the liquid creates a foam of flammable methane gas, and any ignition source can cause combustion. Funk says there is no way to prevent the gas buildup or the foaming, but take precautions:
  - 1) Review emergency plans with all workers and have emergency numbers posted.
  - 2) Liquid manure pits with foam should be worked cautiously and agitated slowly.
  - 3) Turn off electrical unneeded equipment and eliminate any potential ignition source.
  - 4) Fully open all ventilation curtains or ventilation pivot doors and windows.
  - 5) Run ventilation fans at maximum speed to improve exhaustion of the methane.
  - 6) Ensure the building is evacuated during manure agitation and pumping.
  - 7) Continue the maximum ventilation for 30 minutes after pumping has ended.
  - 8) Start the agitation process slowly and increase the speed over time.
- **Your spraying equipment needs winterization** if you have finished harvest and fieldwork for the season says MO ag specialist Charles Ellis. His suggestions are:
  - 1) Cleaning the sprayer inside and out gets rid of dirt, grime and chemical residue.
  - 2) Use a pressure washer with a detergent to wash the whole sprayer and booms.
  - 3) Clean the inside of the spray tank, circulating the solution for 10 minutes.
  - 4) While circulating the cleaning solution, check for leaks and repair them before storing.
  - 5) Remove all filters, screens, tips and check valves to be washed.
  - 6) After washing, reinstall to keep moisture out during the winter.
  - 7) To winterize plumbing and prevent rust, use a 50-50 mix of antifreeze and water.
  - 8) Circulate the antifreeze mixture through the pump system, the boom, and nozzles.
  - 9) Remove spray tips, allow the liquid to drain, and then replace the tips.

*Cornbelt Update* (formerly *Extension Update*) is e-mailed on Friday to selected subscribers and is also on the Internet at [www.farmgate.uiuc.edu](http://www.farmgate.uiuc.edu). E-mail comments to: Stu Ellis at [shellis@illinois.edu](mailto:shellis@illinois.edu).