

Extension Notes

Personal Column for September 16, 2009

By Gary Hall, Iowa State University Regional Extension Education Director for Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Mitchell and Worth County, Iowa

Grade Your Grain Bins

School is in session with yellow school busses running up and down the road, kids on bikes and graded papers making it to your refrigerator door. If you were to grade your grain bins would they get a passing grade? Are they ready to hold grain and provide good quality storage? Take some time to consider preparing your bins and equipment to avoid problems at harvest.

As you know, stored grain insects can invade new grain from infested harvesting and handling equipment. Equipment needs to be cleaned before harvest. Remove all traces of old grain from any equipment used for harvesting, transporting and handling grain. Even small amounts of moldy or insect-infested grain left in equipment can contaminate a new bin grain.

Next, clean grain bins thoroughly, disposing of spilled, cracked and broken grain and grain flour, along with insects feeding on such material. A simple broom and vacuum cleaner are essential in cleaning grain bins. Take advantage of this cool weather and get inside those bins to clean them out. I always got to clean bins when it was boiling hot so with the cooler temperatures it may not be such a nasty job.

If possible, screen out broken kernels, trash and fines to increase the quality of the grain being stored. If you can't do a lot of screening, consider overfilling round bins, then remove a load or two of grain with the center unloading auger to pull some of the fines out of the center of the bin. This also has the advantage of leaving the grain surface nearly level.

Never put new grain on top of old grain because of the risk of infesting the new grain with storage insects and mold organisms. If infested grain is purchased for livestock feed, store it away from the new crop and feed it as soon as possible.

Grain bins require a solid foundation to bear weight. A 9,000 bushel bin is supporting over half a million pounds of grain besides a concrete pad and the weight of the bin itself. Remove old equipment, junk, clutter and tall weeds to reduce attractiveness to mice and rats, which like to burrow under the bin foundation.

Mice often nest in control boxes where they are protected from predators. They can strip insulation from wires for nest material, and their urine sometimes causes corrosion on relays and other electrical components. If rodent damage is found, clean and repair or replace damaged wiring, relays and other electrical equipment. Seal up those knock outs and other openings that may allow rodents to enter.

Fans, heaters and ducts should be checked for corrosion and other damage. Remove any accumulated dust and dirt that may reduce operating efficiency, and be sure all connections are tight to prevent air leaks that can reduce operating efficiency.

Grading your grain bin now before harvest will certainly provide you with a passing grade during and after harvest. Your grain bin grade may not be posted on the refrigerator but you can rest assured that you will enjoy a higher return on your storage investment.

#

Contact: Gary Hall, 2023 S Federal Ave, Mason City, IA 50401, 641-423-0844,
garyhall@iastate.edu