

**INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY**  
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Summer wind storms, stalk rot, other plant diseases and rootworm feeding may have resulted in lodged corn on your farm. If this is true for you, then a change in harvest strategy may be in order to minimize harvest losses and maximize your harvest safety. The following information is taken from comments written by Dr. Mark Hanna, Iowa State University Extension Ag Engineer.

To maximize grain harvest, it is important to measure grain loss in the field behind the combine. This will help determine what combine adjustments may be needed to minimize losses. Ears not gathered into the combine head by the gathering chains are the most common source of machine loss in lodged corn. Each three quarter pound ear found in a hundredth of an acre plot equals a loss of one bushel per acre. For example, an operator using an eight-row thirty-inch corn head (twenty feet wide) would check an area twenty one feet-nine inches long by twenty feet wide behind the combine (area equals 435.6 square feet or one hundredth of an acre). Finding five - three quarter pound size ears would equal a loss of five bushels per acre. Then, check a similar unharvested area ahead of the combine for unattached ears lying on the ground. These pre-harvest losses would not be picked up by the head regardless of adjustment.

To minimize harvest losses in lodged corn, you may need to slow combine travel speed to reduce the amount of missed ears. Harvesting "against the grain" (e.g. harvesting toward the west in east leaning cornstalks) may also reduce losses. Make sure ear savers on the corn head are in good condition. Keep gathering snouts as low as practical to pick up downed ears. Gathering chains may need to be more aggressive. Place stripper bars closer together if ear butt-shelling occurs on the stalk rolls.

If many acres of severely lodged corn are present and the window of time for harvest is anticipated to be short, consider purchasing a corn head reel or other attachments such as crop dividers or lifters. Even if a reel does not decrease losses, it may allow faster combine travel speed with similar losses, allowing harvest to proceed in a more timely manner. Crop dividers mounted on each side of the head help to lift ears into the head that might otherwise escape.

For a successful and safe harvest, recognize that harvest will not be business as usual but more time and effort will be required in areas with lodged corn. Don't shortcut safety in an effort to speed harvest as an injury may result in greater lost time than what the harvest shortcut saved. Stalk rolls pull in crop at about twelve feet per second, much faster than your reaction time to release the grip on a stalk. Do not attempt to unplug stalks from the corn head before disengaging power to the head and stopping the combine engine. Remove the operator's key if there is any chance that another person will be in the cab.

For more information, contact the Grundy office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979. Have a safe harvest season!