

Wheat Harvest Tips

Carefully Time Harvest

- **Monitor field closely for harvest readiness.**
 - Physiological maturity occurs at about 40% moisture.
 - Wheat may dry 2.5% per day between 20% and 40% moisture.
 - The crop can very quickly reach 20% moisture after it matures.



- **Always harvest between 20% and 14% moisture.**
 - **Above 20% moisture:**
 - Harvest damage to the kernels is more likely.
 - Grain can be harder to store.
 - Test weights can be lower.
 - **Below 14% moisture:**
 - Cutterbar losses can increase.
 - Test weights may decline each time the crop gets wet from dew or rain.
 - Lodging may increase.
 - Weeds may grow tall enough to interfere with harvest.
- **Consider harvesting at 18% to 20% moisture and artificially drying the grain.**
 - Allows earlier double-crop planting.
 - Helps achieve maximum wheat and double-crop soybean yields.
 - Helps maintain grain quality.



Check Combine Settings

- **Each time conditions change or varieties change, recheck the settings on the combine.**
 - Air flow across the sieves is very critical when trying to get a good clean sample.
 - The lighter the wheat, the less air needs to be pushed through the sieves.
 - Too much air will result in losses out the back of the machine.
- **Check behind the combine for grain loss.**
 - Remember, about 17 to 18 kernels per square foot equals approximately one bushel per acre.
 - Making a few minor adjustments can reduce harvest loss. The operator's manual will give you step-by-step instructions.
 - Change only one setting at a time, and then check to see what effect that change made.



Make Additional Combine Adjustments

- **Fields infected with head scab may require additional combine adjustments to remove infected seed.**
 - Head scab typically decreases test weight and reduces grain quality.
 - Mycotoxins produced by the scab fungus cause these grain quality issues.
 - Fields severely infected with head scab may require increased fan speeds to remove light, shriveled, infected kernels.



Wheat spikes with symptoms of Fusarium head blight (head scab).

- **When harvesting severely lodged wheat:**
 - Try harvesting in different directions to find the angle at which the header best picks up the wheat.
 - Adjust the reel slightly ahead of the cutter bar and far enough down to lay the head on the platform.
 - The reel should turn slightly faster than ground speed.

- **Maintain soil moisture for double-crop soybeans.**
 - Leave 8 to 12 inches of wheat stubble in the field to help maintain soil moisture.
 - Utilize no-till whenever possible.
- **Manage wheat residue.**
 - Wheat straw should be baled or spread uniformly with the combine.
 - Leaving heavy amounts of residue on the ground may result in poor seed/soil contact during soybean planting.

Drying and Storing Wheat

- **Air drying**
 - Air drying wheat in storage will result in higher test weight and quality.
 - When bin-drying wheat, the bin should only be filled to a depth of about 7 to 9 feet (any deeper and air flow will not be adequate).
 - Make sure the initial layer is dry before filling the remaining space.
 - Wheat provides more resistance to air flow than corn, making it a tough crop to dry in a bin situation.
- **Continuous-flow dryers**
 - Continuous-flow dryers handle wet wheat very well, as they are drying only the portion in the dryer.
- **Drying temperatures and optimum grain moisture**
 - For commercial mill quality, dry wheat at temperatures of 140° F or less.

For seed production, dry wheat at 110° F or less.

- For long-term storage, dry wheat to 12.5% moisture.