

# Stored Corn Varies Considerably In Moisture

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**M**ike Roegge, University of Illinois Extension, Adams/Brown Unit, reports that we all know that quite a bit of this year's corn crop was put into storage under less than ideal conditions, thus making it somewhat more vulnerable to potential storage losses through mold growth, heat, etc. And you've probably all heard of stories over the past month or two of corn that has been found out of condition. It was tough to get the corn crop uniformly dried for good storage conditions over the winter. It will be even more important to make sure that the grain mass is uniform in temperature and moisture once spring arrives and we get warmer temperatures, which can cause a greater concern for corn spoilage.

Several things to keep in mind for those stored bushels. First, remember that stored grain will vary considerably in moisture even though it has all been run through the dryer. It went in the dryer with individual kernels varying in moisture by 15-20 percent from driest to wettest, and it exited varying in moisture. The difference is that there was much more wetter corn entering and much more of the drier corn exiting. But, there was considerable variance between individual kernels. It doesn't take many wet kernels to cause problems, and that has already happened.

If you haven't taken a load or two out of each bin, do so. That helps reduce broken kernels and improve air flow. Also level the bin after. Air will travel through the easiest route. Make sure the bin allows air flow uniformly throughout the mass, otherwise you'll get problems, even with a

stirrer.

As temperatures rise this spring, make sure you warm the grain mass to within 10-15 degrees of the outside air temperature. This will reduce moisture condensation. And moisture condensation is one of the biggest enemies of stored grain. Once moisture increases, heat will be formed, and then it's like a snowball rolling downhill: your problem will escalate. It may take just a couple of days to move a drying front through the grain mass, or it may take several weeks. It all depends upon fan speed and bushels.

Check the condition of the grain now and again every few weeks. Turn on the fan. When the fan is running, open one of the bin lids and smell the air exiting for signs of odor. Walk across or probe the surface to see if crusting has occurred.

You may need to move grain around to get some mixing and to get some of the wetter grain to a drying bin. We've been getting reports of corn coming out of bins at higher moisture levels than it went in. So take a couple of checks of moisture levels in your bins. Get some samples from the middle and lower levels of the bin if possible to compare.

Experts are cautioning to not store poor quality corn any longer than winter. Don't take chances if you have grain that is in questionable condition. Run the fan and check for odor. Check for condensation on the underside of the bin roof. Remove the centers of bins, level the grain and take moisture readings from various portions of the grain mass. Δ



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