

# Wet Ending To A Cool, Wet Season

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**T**he 2008 and 2009 growing seasons are proving to be very similar in a couple of aspects. In both years, planting was greatly delayed due to excessively wet conditions from April through mid-June. In both years, corn yields ended up being much higher than one would expect, given the lateness of planting. There is one important difference in the two growing seasons, however. In 2008, a sunny, warm, nearly ideal September and October enabled the corn crop to field dry relatively quickly, and harvest to proceed at a near normal pace. That has not been the case this year.

The 2009 corn crop was not only planted late, temperatures averaged considerably below normal for most of the summer. September and October were cool, cloudy and wet, which further slowed crop maturity and dry-down. Therefore, it should come as no great surprise that the corn remains wetter than many growers have had to deal with for a number of years.

There is no denying that the yields of today's corn hybrids are much higher than they were just a few years ago. There is also no denying that the industry has made great advances in planting and harvesting technology. Unfortunately, the same can't always be said for many

on-farm grain drying and handling systems. Rather than spending money to upgrade drying systems, there has been an ongoing trend towards early planting of less than full season hybrids with improved field dry-down characteristics. As a result, producers haven't had to handle very wet corn for many years, and out-of-date drying systems have been adequate to handle the limited job they were given. With this year's wet corn, however, 30-year-old drying systems designed to handle the output of a four-row corn head are going to be seriously challenged.

So what can be done in the short term to remediate the problem? Unfortunately, there is little that can be done at this point to speed the drying and handling process, and attempting to push too much wet grain through too small a system will potentially lead to spoilage in storage. If drying systems aren't capable of handling wet grain at a rapid rate of harvest, then harvest speed may need to be reduced, or the crop allowed to field dry further. As the season progresses and temperatures get cold, it may be possible to chill grain through aeration and hold it temporarily until it can be further dried or sold. Monitor all storage bins at least on a weekly basis to insure that grain is staying in good condition, and quickly deal with grain that is developing problems to minimize losses. Δ

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