

TIMELY INFORMATION

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Finishing the Wheat Crop in Central Alabama

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The wheat harvest is promising with early yields reported to be above average with the possibility of hitting both a good crop and pricing year. You want to take full advantage of this opportunity that is rare.

Wheat marketing, harvesting, delivering and storage is as important as growing the crop. Usually, two weeks is about all the harvest time we have, once the crops dry to near the 13.5% standard moisture for marketing wheat. Wet weather is the worse condition for wheat harvesting, as it results in loss of yield, test weight, and may promote sprouting, lodging and overall problems. Thus, starting harvest as quickly as possible is advised to lessen harvest grain quality problems. Forward pricing and on-farm storage are important harvesting/marketing tools, even more so with the big crop and big swings in commodity prices this year.

Elevators are confronting a big crop, meaning that when the supply is up, the buyer is more extreme in discounting or rejecting wheat for any and all reasons. The basis, or the difference, between the Chicago Board of Trade "Board" and the local price is currently in the \$2-\$3 per bushel range.

Baling the wheat straw provides income and may improve the seeding of a second crop as soybeans, though delaying planting may also reduce soybean yields. Straw removal of 3,000 lbs would reduce nitrogen (N) amount by 20 lbs, phosphorous (P) 7 lbs and potassium (K) 42 lbs/acre. You can calculate the value of P & K that may be taken off with the straw. I would estimate about \$30/acre.

Storage

Wheat and other small grains are the most challenging to store during the summer, particularly regarding insects which can change wheat to flour.

1. Clean bins.
2. Apply an empty bin treatment such as Tempo.
3. When loading, apply an insecticide as Storecide II and Diacon II, an insect growth regulator (IGR) (see IPM Guide).
4. If more than one bin is available, truck loads can be alternated for unloading to reduce bin fill and to allow for faster drying with aeration.
5. Do not fill bins past the top of the cylinder as this will allow more aeration, heat to escape, and facilitate monitoring for insects and treating if necessary. Spread any cone shaped pile to increase cooling.
6. Moisture must be reduced to the 11-12% for storage, which means running the fans continuously for the first few days. Wheat may be loaded into bins, near 15% moisture, as long as your fans will push or pull (reverse) 1 cubic foot/minute (cfm) as 3000 bushels in a bin would require a minimum of 3000 cfm.
7. Temperature monitoring will allow you to aerate when the air temperature is cooler than the grain, then aerate. A metal clad thermometer can be taped to a steel rod and probed 8-10 feet into the bin and removed after 3-5 minutes. A digital thermometer with wires can be placed from the inside of the bin to a meter and checked weekly.
8. Insects must be monitored regularly. The plastic pit fall traps can be placed in the bins and checked after 3 days to give you a good snapshot of infestation.

Temporary storage, as in a seed house, is the last option and is very risky, but it might keep the combine running and keep you from losing the crop.

If so:

- treat as an empty bin with an insecticide;
- load wheat not over 11% moisture;
- treat while loading with the grain protectants Storecide II and Diacon II;
- if the wheat becomes infested, it will have to be fumigated, which means the pile will have to be covered with plastic and sealed well with tape;
- remove wheat ASAP

More information on grain storage can be found at:

www.alabamacrops.com

- *click on* **Grain Crops**;
- *click on* **Grain Crops Website**;
- *click on* **Stored Grain** (view the tape with Calhoun County Farmer, Doug Trantham, and others)

Also, on the **stored grain website** are the following publications:

- *click on* **Publications** (on top)
- *click on* **Integrated Pest Management**, which includes the following publications:

IPM Recommendations for Stored Grain

IPM Tactics for On-Farm Stored Grain

Fumigating Agriculture Commodities with Phosphine

Where can I borrow a Phosphine Gas Detector? The *Alabama Wheat and Feed Grains Committee* bought some gas detectors to help with fumigating grain which can help with safety and finding gas leaks on the bins being treated.

Acknowledgments: Dr. Kathy Flanders, *Extension Entomologist*, is responsible for securing this information and support with regard to grain storage and insect management. Paul Sumner, *UGA Extension Agriculture Engineer*, also contributed to this information.

If I can help you locate any storage material, or if I can help you in any way with your farm, please contact me at 334-850-7062.