Weekly Article

Why is My Corn Not Drying Down?

10-20-2020

Hello, my Name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural resource Educator and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of Agriculture. This week has started out on a soggy note with much of the county receiving 1- 1.5 inches of rain. This is a welcome site for many cattle farmers watching pasture condition deteriorate and for many producers who have seeded new hay fields, cover crops and winter wheat. Many producers are trying to get crops harvested, the rain could have held off. Many producers have started soybean and corn harvest and dry days with low humidity levels will be needed to get the crop out of the field at ideal moisture levels.

I have had a few producers ask me why it is taking so long for the corn crop to dry down. Reported moisture levels of 26-30% moisture has been common. Ideal harvesting moistures for corn is 15-17 % and storage moisture levels should be around 13%. We have quite a way to go to get to those moisture levels, the question is why? Some late planted corn has a good excuse due to the lack of growing degree days. For the corn that was planted mid to Late May however growing degree days have been accumulated and the weather has provided sufficient drying conditions. Here are a few possibilities and factors that might be causing the delay in the corn dry down period.

- It all starts at planting- Think back to the planting season, most corn was planted in cooler than average and wetter than average conditions. This can cause many issues to occur from disease to delayed emergence or overall poor stands. Probably the main factor is poor root development. With saturated soils, root development is restricted preventing plant development and nutrient uptake.
- Dry growing season- Even though we had a very warm growing season, it was dry this prevents nutrient uptake, the critical nutrient for corn is nitrogen. Without proper nitrogen uptake the plant will develop slower than normal. Lack of nitrogen will also slow the grain fill process.
- Late rains- August brought some late rains, for many this was a life saver. The late rains also allowed plants to take up additional nitrogen in the soil. This late nitrogen uptake might have extended the R5 stage (grain fill stage) by a week or more.
- Cooler September- On average September was cooler than normal also delaying maturity rates. Moisture levels at black layer should be around 35%. When

proper drying condition occur (dry, sunny, breezy, and low humidity) grain moisture levels can decrease .75 – 1% a day.

Some other details to go over is

- USDA will be providing direct assistance to farmers impacted by Corona virus for the second time this year. Producers can contact the FSA office to sign up for their second round of payments for 2020. Sign up deadline is December 11th, 2020 you should call before coming to the office. The phone number to call is (937) 544 2033.
- 2021 elections for Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs opened October 13th and will close March 15th, 2021. Contact the Ladies at Farm service Agency about signing up for one of these programs (937) 544-2033
- Adams Soil and Water Conservation District is collecting Common Milkweed Pods throughout the month of October, call (937) 544-2033 or go to adamssoilandwater.org for details.
- Check out my survey for local crop yields, I would appreciate your help in constructing a local hybrid/ variety utilization spreadsheet for the growing season 2021. The survey can be found at adams.osu.edu and Adams OSU Facebook page.
- I am considering a meeting later this fall or winter based on climate change and how it is affecting your farm operation and the public. There is a survey on both our web site and Facebook page.

From the Field

In scouting field conditions for Adams County, the following is things I have noticed.

1. Last week great strides were made in the soybean harvest I would estimate 30% complete.
2. Corn Harvest has started but off to a slow start.
3. Wheat planting continues and more cover crops are being planted after soybean harvest.
4. Some fall tillage is being done mostly vertical tillage or discing.
5. Fall fertilizer application mostly Potash (0-0-60) and ag lime.
6. Saturday mornings frost put an end to most summer annual crops and weeds.
7. Pasture conditions or short and producers have started feeding hay.