



By Russ Pankonin

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When weather forecasters predicted high winds for Thursday, Oct. 18, farmers with corn still in the field knew it probably wouldn't be good on their fields.

But they probably didn't fully anticipate the damage that 60 to 70 mph winds would leave behind after the storm front passed.

What farmers found was that fields yielding 200 bushels the day before the storm were yielding anywhere from 30 to 100 bushels less than a day after the storm.

Why? Because the high winds knocked the ears right off the stalk onto the ground.

Now farmers are faced with the dilemma of trying to get corn off the ground and in the bin, one way or another.

Even with multi-peril insurance, the loss may not be enough for a farmer to collect on the insurance, based on historic yields.

With corn worth more than \$7 per bushel, a farmer can't afford to just leave 30 to 100 bushels on the ground.

Not only that, if that corn is left on the ground this year, farmers will face significant problems with volunteer corn in their fields next year.

About 80 percent of the area corn fields were harvested before the wind storm hit. But that still leaves plenty of fields to deal with.

Farmers considering options

Farmers are looking at several options to recoup the portion of the crop now on the ground. Jason Chandler, owner of South Fork Harvesters, has been overwhelmed with calls from farmers wanting his help.

Chandler bought a pair of hay rakes and began raking the fields into windrows.

He took off the corn heads on his combines and put on pick-up heads used on beans and millet.

He then picks up the windrow and runs it through the combine.

It's been a work in progress, Chandler noted. They've completed one field and have raked up another.

The biggest challenge he was finding was the amount of dirt being picked up with the windrow.

His challenge Tuesday was to devise some way to separate the dirt from the corn.

He built some angled screens to unload the corn from the grain cart into the truck.

The screens let the dirt fall through, with clean corn falling into the truck.

Chandler said he has more than 60 fields to pick up right now, with more calls coming daily.

He said Wednesday would provide a good test of how long it would take to rake and pick up a

field, along with how much corn the farmer can expect to recoup.

Jeff Wallin is considering the pick-up option, as well, but first he's trying the manual labor approach.

Wallin hired a crew to walk a harvested field and pick up the fallen ears of corn.

They began work on a field Tuesday so Wallin said he'll evaluate that method, based on how long it takes and how much corn can be reclaimed.

He estimated 20 to 30 bushels of corn were on the ground in the field they were working on.

Wallin said he's never seen anything quite like this during his farming career and hopes he doesn't see it ever again.

It's just one more characteristic of a year of farming that's been uniquely strange from the beginning.