



Risks Associated with Lodged Wheat

The high wind speeds coupled with high rainfall amounts in late June led to significant lodging in some fields across Michigan. While growers are aware of the physical and engineering challenges of harvesting lodged wheat, there may be additional concerns this season as the prolonged hot, damp weather following lodging may have accentuated risks to grain quality. The following outlines some additional concerns imposed by lodged wheat and steps that might mitigate some of these risks:

- Head Blight: Fusarium head blight infections in lodged wheat tend to be higher than the rest of the field. This may lead to elevated DON (vomitoxin) levels. Growers might consider sampling these areas before developing a harvest strategy.
- Other diseases that could lead to discounts and be more severe in lodged wheat include black point and glume blotch. Where lodging is severe and extensive, growers might harvest a sample to bring to their elevator for grading and determining discount amounts. Where grain condition is very poor, lodged areas could be harvested and the grain held separately.
- Test weight: kernel weight and integrity tend to slowly decline in lodged wheat. This, in part, depends on when the wheat lodged relative to kernel maturity, and the subsequent moisture and humidity levels.
- Preharvest sprouting: PHS may be more severe in lodged wheat. Where lodging is extensive, the down wheat should be sampled and graded separately, and a conscious decision should be made as to whether it should be harvested and loaded separately from standing wheat. This is particularly important where wheat quality is compromised by PHS as the sprouted/ low falling number wheat can substantially and disproportionately reduce the falling number score within a load or bin.
- Fecal material: It is quite striking how much animal waste can sometime be found perched on lodged wheat. These contributions from critters such as deer, racoon and birds are difficult to separate from grain in the harvesting process. Growers should keep in mind that there is zero tolerance of fecal material in delivered grain. Where fecal matter is extensive (such as along woods and fence rows) consider skipping small areas if necessary.
- Grain moisture: The moisture content of grain in seriously lodged areas is usually significantly higher than in standing wheat. Rather than delaying the harvest of the standing wheat, one might consider postponing the harvest of the lodged portion of the field particularly if falling number scores are declining and the harvest weather window is tight.

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