



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

## **Hardin County Extension News Release**

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### **Corn Quality Concerns**

*Hardin County* – Besides yield loss in corn from a dry to droughty year, farmers also face grain quality issues expressed as low test weight or diseased corn ears. Disease often infects an ear after kernels have been damaged by birds and insects. Stress caused by heat and lack of moisture may also make ears more susceptible to disease. Elevators will reduce the price a farmer receives for their grain depending on the percentage of kernels infected with disease. Some diseases produce mycotoxins that are harmful to livestock. If mycotoxins levels are too high in a load of grain, an elevator may reject and not purchase the grain.

Besides the potential for a lower grain price, ear molds in a field may force a farmer to change their harvest and storage management. They will need to harvest these fields at higher grain moisture (harvest earlier) to prevent further disease development. The extra grain drying will increase the storage cost. If not dried quickly to 14% moisture, the disease kernels may spread to other areas of the bin. Also, a farmer cannot store diseased kernels for an extended period compared to disease-free grain.

A farmer will have to make combine adjustments to deal with rotted grain and cobs. The disease material will break into small pieces and increase the amount of fine particles in the grain. Fines will decrease air flow during grain drying, making it more difficult to dry grain and may allow further mold development in storage. Farmers will increase the combine's fan speed and other adjustment in an attempt to blow out the lighter fines and diseased kernels during the threshing process. The need to change combine settings from field to field is time consuming and the whole process will slow down harvest.

Local elevators test corn deliveries for disease and mycotoxin to make handling and storage decisions. Farmers will note hybrids that have had disease incidents and make sure to not select them next year. Also, a farmer may select hybrids that have the GMO Bt gene against many of the ear feeding insects to decrease insect damage.

*Written by Ed Lentz, OSU Extension-Hancock County, and revised by Mark Badertscher, OSU Extension-Hardin County.*