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THE FIRST AND SECOND LOADS of wheat arrived at the Decatur Co-op on Friday afternoon. Co-op employee Jack Brown (left) helped Paul Tally empty his truck. The wheat belonged to Dale Soderlund.
— Photo by Cynthia Haynes

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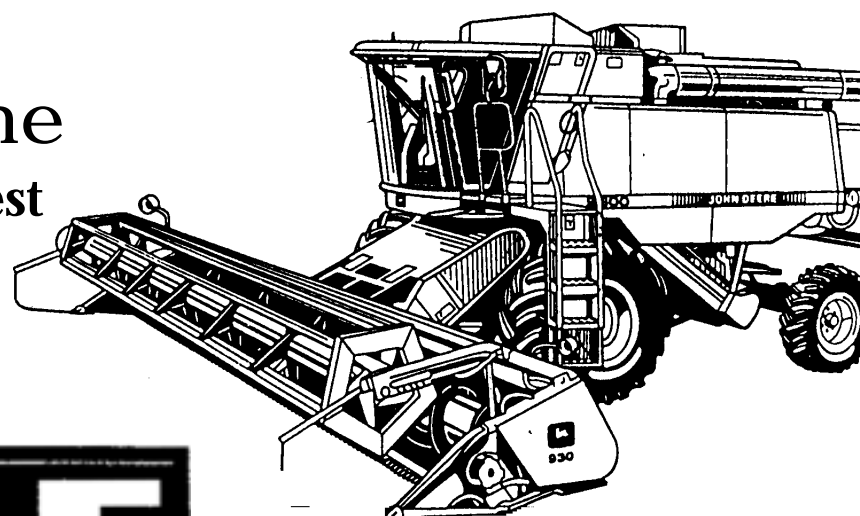


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Extension Lines

*By Brian Olson
Extension Agronomist*

Set combine to ensure maximum cutting

This year has definitely been a tough one for wheat fields in the area. The drought plus the freeze has been a one-two punch against high wheat yields.

Because of the short, thin wheat, farmers will have to make sure their combines are set properly to maximize harvest.

Below is an abbreviated list of tips from Randy Taylor and Mark Schrock, K-State research and extension ag engineers, on how to set combines when using a conventional header:

- Tilt the cutter bar up so the skip plates are exposed.
- Check the gas charge of the header accumulator.
- Level the header from side to side.
- Adjust reel speed to slightly faster than ground speed.
- Tines may need to be covered with plywood to form a solid bat in extremely short wheat.

• Make sure all knives are sharp and not broken.

• Finger timing should be adjusted for later extension of the fingers.

• Driving too fast will drag the crop under the cutter bar before it is cut.

• Fan settings and sieve openings should be set so they are not blowing lightweight wheat out.

Another option when cutting short wheat is to use a stripper header, which will keep more of the residue available in the field as standing stubble.

In addition, farmers will have to stay on top of the ripening process and cut right away when the wheat is mature. The shattering potential for ripe wheat will likely increase for all varieties due to the freeze, which may have slightly damaged the connection of the berry to the spikelet. As the wheat fills, it becomes heavier, and a weakened connection to the spikelet could cause a ripe kernel to shatter easier.

J.P. Michaud, K-State entomologist at the Hays research station, has been recording high numbers of wheat head armyworm moths. However, currently there is no economic threshold where the number of wheat head armyworms justifies application of an insecticide. If there is damage, it will likely be similar to last year with wheat harvested earlier, typically of poorer quality and having the most damage, especially from areas on the field margins.

A complete and more detailed list entitled "Harvesting Tips for Short, Thin Wheat" can be picked-up at the local extension office or downloaded from www.oznet.ksu.edu/agronomy-block2 under the section "Production and Pests."

Brian Olson is extension agronomist for Decatur, Gove, Norton, Sheridan, and Trego counties. E-mail bolson@oznet.ksu.edu if you have any questions or would like to see a newspaper article on a specific crop production topic. For more information, contact the county extension office, 475-8121.

Wishing everyone a bountiful harvest

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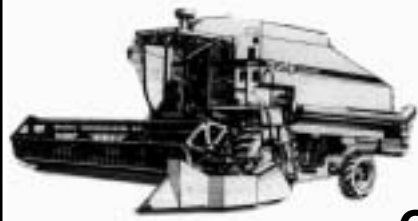
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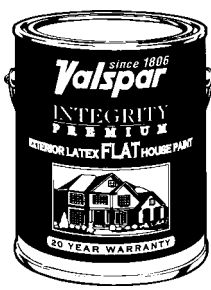
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Home Time

*By Tranda Watts
Multi-county Extension Agent*

Harvest wheat safely

It's wheat harvest time in Kansas, and the hectic pace makes it easy to forget about safety. Sound personal judgment, or a lack of it, will play a major role in whether or not the 2004 harvest is completed safely.

Consider these tips for maintaining safety during harvest:

• Recognize hazards. Make sure that anyone operating the combine has been trained to use it and is aware of potential hazards. Review the operator's manual and warning decals ahead of harvest.

• Keep current with routine machinery maintenance. Make sure all safety shields and guards are in place before harvest begins. Keep up with routine lubrication, and check belts and chains regularly.

• Before approaching machinery for maintenance or inspection, make sure it's shut down with the engine off, the key is removed, and all moving parts have stopped completely.

• Keep bystanders away from harvesting equipment, and never allow extra riders. One seat means one rider.

• Share the road. When it is necessary to move heavy, slow-moving equipment on public roads, try to

pick a time with light traffic flow to minimize contact with traffic. Follow all traffic laws, and make sure all the safety lights work properly and safety reflectors are visible to other motorists. Always use a Slow Moving Vehicle emblem on vehicles that travel less than 25 miles per hour.

• Be physically and mentally prepared before operating the combine or truck. Fatigue, stress, and worry can impair the ability to make rational decisions.

• Practice safe work habits all the time. Set a good example for others to follow.

It takes time to prevent accidents, but it takes only seconds for a farm accident to happen. Farmers can do their part to make this year's harvest accident free. Plan ahead; think safety first.

Tranda Watts is Kansas State University extension specialist in food, nutrition, health and safety for Decatur, Gove, Norton, Sheridan, and Trego counties. Call her at 785-443-3663 or e-mail twatts@oznet.ksu.edu. For more information, contact the county extension office, 475-8121.

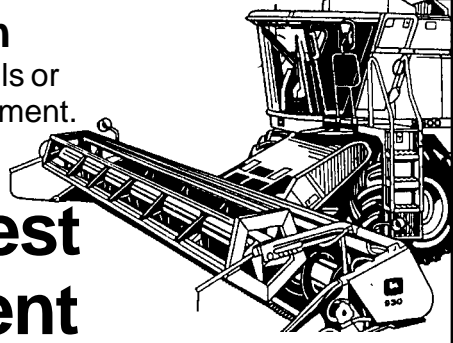
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