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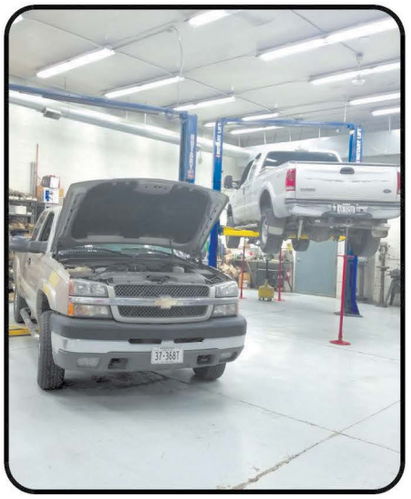
The Minden Courier



Happy Harvest 2026

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Progressive Ag Safety Day





Axtell, Minden and Wilcox-Hildreth 4th-6th grade students participated in Progressive Ag Safety Day on September 22 at Kearney County Fairgrounds.

Nebraska Extension organizes the annual educational event sponsored by the Progressive Ag Foundation. Utilizing resources and curriculum provided by the national foundation, organizers collaborate with local FFA chapters who provide members to teach lessons and serve as group leaders to the younger students.

The goal of the day is to help kids be prepared to be safe on the farm, personally, and at home. Southern Public Power District gave demonstrations on electrical safety and CPI demonstrated grain bin safety as part of the event.

At the end of the day, students went home with goody bags filled with more products and information from local businesses to help them practice safety.

Nebraska Farm Bureau Focused on Protecting Producer Profitability; President Says Taxing Agriculture Inputs Would Harm Farm and Ranch Families

PRESS RELEASE

LINCOLN, NEB – Nebraska Farm Bureau (NEFB) President Mark McHargue says the state's largest general farm organization is focused on enacting policies to protect profitability for Nebraska's farmers and ranchers who have faced numerous challenges in recent years. The comments were made during a Sept. 16, Husker Harvest Days event. According to McHargue, significantly higher input costs, higher interest rates, lower commodity prices, trade wars, and unsettled trade policy, combined with natural disasters like this spring and summer's wildfires, have put many producers in difficult positions leaving them to make hard decisions.

"Farmers and ranchers are optimists. We understand the cyclical nature of agriculture. That said, protecting profitability is the most important thing we can do to ensure there is a next generation of agriculture producers," said McHargue. "We're engaging in numerous spaces to protect profitability."

A spike in fuels cost is just the latest challenge as diesel fuel, a major input cost across all agriculture sectors, hit a record high exceeding $6 per gallon earlier this month. The price hike hit just as combines started rolling for harvest season, a period of substantial fuel use. NEFB State Board Member Matt Jedlicka, a farmer, cattle feeder, and member of the Colfax County Farm Bureau, said that the added costs will take a bite out of on-farm profits.

"The higher fuel and input prices are hitting home on both the farming and cattle feeding side. We're coming into a period of a lot of cattle movement. We have calves going through sale barns heading to backgrounding lots. A lot of yearlings are hitting the feedyards now. Right now, I'm paying a surcharge to have our cattle hauled due to the higher diesel prices. It's just a really bad time for the diesel price hike," said Jedlicka. "We also we can't forget that fertilizer costs are also tied to diesel and fuel costs. Talking to my supplier, we've seen nitrogen increases of $20 per ton over the last couple of months. We're feeling the effects."

During the event, NEFB called on elected officials to examine ways to bring down excessive fuel prices.

In remarks, McHargue said tax policy also plays a major role in profitability, specifically property taxes, given the land intensive nature of agriculture. While NEFB has worked with the Legislature to provide property tax relief for all Nebraskans, those dedicated state monies will likely face scrutiny this coming legislative session in the face of a projected state budget shortfall of $1 billion across the current and upcoming budget cycle.

"We recognize the budget problem, but we simply can't afford to go backward with property tax relief. We are fully prepared to protect Nebraska taxpayers from any rollbacks that would lead to major property tax hikes," said McHargue.

McHargue told attendees that elimination of state sales tax exemptions is also likely to be discussed in the upcoming state budget discussions and that Farm Bureau is adamantly opposed to the elimination of sales tax exemptions on agricultural inputs.

NEFB Board member Lance Atwater, a farmer, and member of the Adams/Webster County Farm Bureau, told attendees that taxing agriculture inputs could effectively put farmers out of business.

"As a young producer, I have a lot of conversations with my peers, and they continue to center around whether we can keep farming in an environment where input costs keep going up, but prices for our commodities aren't keeping up. There's constant volatility in the markets and our profit margins continue to shrink. If the Legislature were to tax agriculture inputs such as seed, fertilizer, crop protection tools, machinery, and equipment, it would only further shrink those margins and opportunity for profitability, potentially putting producers out of business. If the Legislature taxed inputs, I estimate that I'd pay 170% more in taxes than what I currently pay in property taxes," said Atwater. "That's money that wouldn't be reinvested in my operation or be spent in the local economy. We need to make sure our elected leaders understand taxing inputs is just bad tax policy. It's not good for farmers or rural Nebraska."

McHargue also noted the importance of growing markets and expanding value added agriculture opportunities to help profitability. Farm Bureau's support for growing Nebraska's livestock sector, securing passage of year-round E-15 to boost ethanol use, securing trade agreements to sell more Nebraska commodities and goods internationally, and supporting growth in the biofuels and bioeconomy industry here in Nebraska were among other needs.

McHargue also pointed out that Farm Bureau is heavily vested in reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens and cutting red-tape to limit excess costs on farms and ranches.

"We have worked with the Administration to address regulations to limit federal authority over private land and waters, as well as rollback the EPA's Diesel Exhaust Fluid (DEF) requirements. Today we're working diligently to make sure farmers continue to have access to much needed crop protection products."

"We want young people to know there is a future in agriculture, and they can come back to the farm or ranch. Farm Bureau is here to make sure Nebraska remains the best place in America to raise a family and produce the world's food, fuel, and fiber," said McHargue.

NOTE:

On Sept. 3, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service released updated estimates of U.S. farm production expenses for 2026. The report indicated the expense outlook has deteriorated significantly. USDA raised its 2026 total production expense forecast by $15.1 billion since February to $492.8 billion. Fuel and oil expenses are now projected to jump 28.8%, fertilizer expenses 15.3% and livestock purchases up 11.4% from the earlier forecast. The American Farm Bureau's analysis of the report is available here: https://www.fb.org/intel/markets/usda-revises-farm-income-higher-but-costs-still-bite

*Detailed numbers for Nebraska will be released by USDA in November.





2026 South Central Nebraska Crops, Cattle, and Commerce Highs, Lows, and Goals

LORI POTTER, SPECIAL TO THE COURIER

MINDEN - Corn and soybean crops in south-central Nebraska were doing OK by early September, according to farmers Chris Grams of Upland and Steve Nelson of Axtell, but some area farmers had better luck finally getting rain late in the growing season.

"You deal with Mother Nature and you can't control that," said Nelson, a Nebraska Farm Bureau past president.

His family was among the south-central Nebraska farmers who started irrigation systems early because of extremely dry fields at planting time. Some farmers started them ahead of planting and many then added water to incorporate fertilizer and herbicides.

"Everything got watered more than usual at planting time," Nelson added, and it was difficult to get the plant stands wanted because of the early dry conditions.

Still, he expects a good, but not record corn crop. Soybeans were more difficult to judge.

"Decent" is how Grams, Nebraska Corn Growers Association board chairman, described his family's Franklin County corn. There were a few pollination issues.

Many farmers made late planting decisions because of early season drought. That included shifting to soybeans or planting last-minute corn for feed because cattle producers expected drought-limited pastures. "There were probably a few more acres put in for the feed season," Grams said. "Just a lot of late-in-the-planting season decisions."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service lists Nebraska's corn production at 10.45 million bushels harvested last year and 10.75 million bushels planted in 2026.



When the 2026 corn harvest is done, combines, tractors, grain carts and trucks will be moved out of stubble fields. Cattle will be moved into many for fall and winter grazing. (Courier photo by Lori Potter, Special to the Courier)





Soybean acre numbers are 4.79 million harvested in 2025 and 4.85 million expected plantings in 2026.

Grams said that on the export market front, Mexico still seems to be buying quite a bit of corn, and it helps to have local ethanol plants as a another market.

Many farmers faced high prices for fuel and especially fertilizer because of the Iran War that has caused shipping disruptions of those essential inputs through the Strait of Hormuz.

Grams said fertilizer costs have more than doubled from early 2026 to now, except for a smalll window in June when prices dropped a little. “Some guys were cutting the amount they used,” he said.

Tariffs, trade spats with Canada and other important trading partners, and weather issues also have caused heartaches and headaches for crop and livestock producers throughout growing season and into harvest.

Nelson said tariff threats and other talk are “disruptions to the markets and create unease in the markets.” There has been plenty of short-term pain talk backed by promises of long-term gain, he added, “but we have yet to see much gain.”

Despite such a tough 2026 on many fronts, Nelson and Grams said harvest season remains their favorite time of the year. Grams said it’s because farmers see the rewards of their labor.

Cattle Issues, Too

NASS numbers for Nebraska cattle in January 2026 included: 1.56 million beef cows and 2.8 million cattle on feed.

Nebraska Cattlemen President Craig Uden of Johnson Lake, a Darr Feedlot co-owner, cow-calf producer and National Cattlemen’s Beef Association past president, probably doesn’t have enough fingers to count the 2026 difficulties for beef producers.

They include approximately 1 million acres of grasslands burned in Nebraska wildfires, continuing drought in many places, tariffs, a presidential order to allow 300,000 metric tons of foreign ground beef to enter the country, and issues with Canada and other important trading partners.



Farmer and former Nebraska Farm Bureau President Steve Nelson was pleased with the few ears of corn he checked late this summer in his family’s cornfield adjacent to his back yard southeast of Axtell. Irrigation pivots still were running, even though there had been some welcome late growing season rains in Kearney County. (Courier photo by Lori Potter, Special to the Courier)

Those issues make continuing efforts to rebuild U.S. beef herds since the COVID years’ declines even more difficult. “We keep moving in that direction, but it’s been tough ... a perfect storm,” Uden said, noting that South Korea and Japan continue to be major importers of U.S. beef.

Fortunately, most cow-calf producers in the Sandhills and other parts of Nebraska with devastaing wildfires have been able to move their cattle to other areas for as long as summer grasslands last. “It’s not that it rained and everything is good again ... Mother Nature hasn’t been good to us the last six or seven years,”he said.

Another challenge for all ag producers is seeing members of the next generation of potential farmers, ranchers and hired hands decide to do something else.

“We don’t have a farm bill at all,” Uden said. “And that’s a challenge, no doubt about it.”

He said there has been some profitability in the beef industry this year, but not for all sectors at the same time. That requires more stability and balancing domestic herds with cattle coming in from Mexico.

And the closing of the Tyson Beef plant in Lexington this year, plus another Tyson plant in Illinois and a JBS plant in Pennsylvania in late summer, didn’t improve market stability.





A Magic Wand

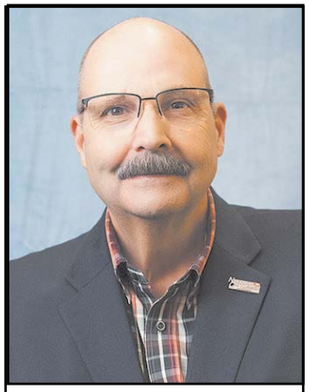
Nelson, Grams, Uden and KAPPA Ethanol Chief Executive Officer Chuck Woodside were asked what they would wish for if they could wave a magic wand and change one issue affecting their businesses in 2026.

"We really need to complete some deals and find markets for what we raise, especially since we're the best at producing protein and that helps feed producers as well," Nelson said.

Woodside said getting year-round use of E15 nationwide would help ethanol and related industries. "It's nonsense that we can't get year-round E15 passed (in all states)," Nelson added.

"I'd say lower input prices, specifically fertilizer. That has been messed up," Grams said about the one thing he'd like to see change for crop producers.

All four mentioned uncertainty issues on many fronts.



CRAIG UDEN
(Courtesy of Nebraska Cattlemen)

"Stability," Uden said when asked about is magic wand wish. "We have a lot of moving parts and there are shocks to the system. We need stability so everyone in our business can make a good living."

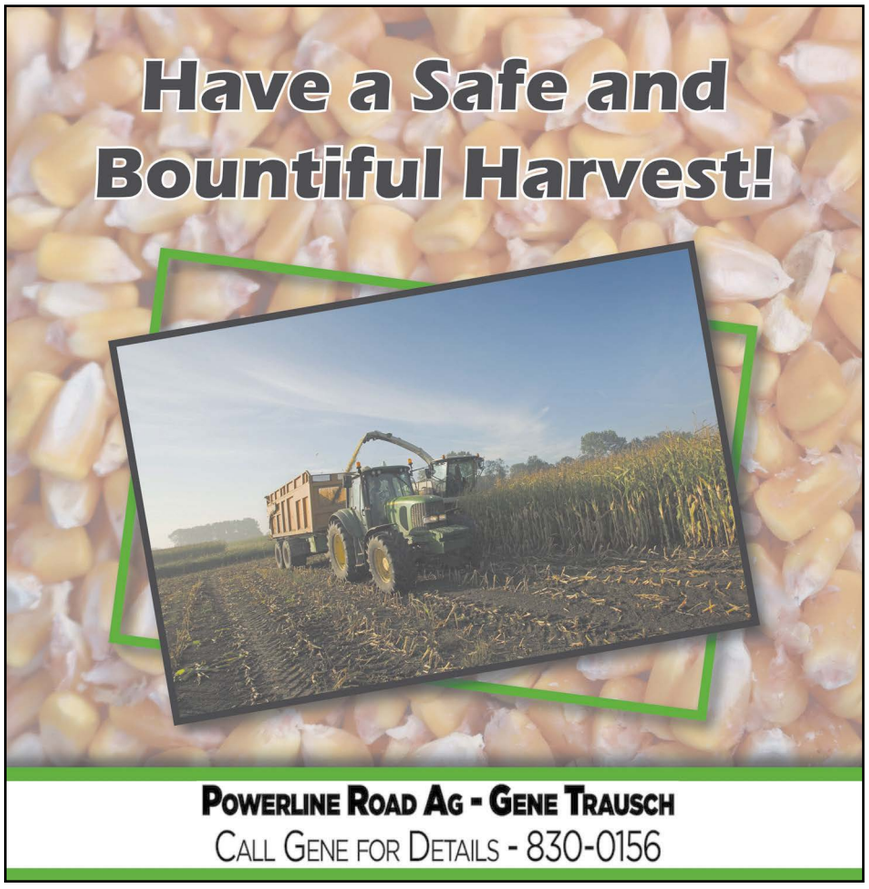
Issues affecting corn, beef and ethanol products also impact other agribusinesses. Grams said an area equipment dealer told him that his company will brace for tough times for the next 12 to 18 months.

As for after-harvest meetings between families and ag lenders to plan for 2027, Grams believes "those pencils will need to be sharpened."

"In spite of all these things, I'm still positive about the future of agriculture," Nelson said. "It's not going to be easy, but farmers and ranchers are very resilient in working with the circumstances they have. Especially young farmers and ranchers.



Nebraska Corn Growers Association Board Chairman Chris Grams of Upland, pictured during the 2024 harvest season, expected the 2026 crop to be "decent," with a good, but not a record harvest. (Courier photo by Lori Potter, Special to the Courier)







Share Your Harvest With Your Community

By Jeff Yost

It's a familiar, nostalgic sight: every fall, the hue of Nebraska corn shifts from emerald to yellow. Those golden fields are one of the first signs of autumn, an announcement that apple cider, pumpkin pie, and brisk winds are not far away.

For many in the Nebraska Community Foundation network, incoming harvest season is also a reminder that there are many ways to give back to your community beyond a checkbook or estate plan. Over the years, generous farmers have opted to donate gifts of grain or livestock to their local NCF affiliated fund. By contributing commodities like corn or cattle, farmers and ranchers can save significantly on taxes while strengthening the mission of community.

Dan and Sarah Miller made a five-year pledge of gifts of grain to the Shickley Community Foundation Fund.

"Giving bushels of corn instead of dollars allows us to make a larger gift to our community fund, because we can still deduct all our production costs on our income taxes. It's a really smart way to give back," Dan said.

When the Byron Community Foundation Fund was raising money for a new community building, one of the key strategies was to bring in the agricultural community. At the time, the farm economy was exceptionally strong, and people had the capacity to give much more than in the past. The Fund leaders knew they needed to take advantage of the favorable timing for a fundraising campaign.

During its first year of operation, the Byron Community Foundation Fund received generous gifts of grain worth more than $100,000. Farmers delivered corn and soybeans to their local elevator and transferred ownership to Nebraska Community Foundation for the benefit of the Byron Community Fund. The Fund raised another $450,000 in cash and pledges in less than a year.

The late Paul and Karen Seger lived in the Atkinson area all their lives. They raised eight children there, owned and operated the funeral homes in Atkinson and Stuart, and served as volunteers and community activists.

That history will live on through the Paul and Karen Seger Family Fund. An initial gift of ag commodities (kidney beans) raised on the family farms and valued at approximately $130,000, established an endowment that will benefit community activities and organizations in Atkinson, Stuart, Antelope County and Elgin.

So how does this work? As in Byron, instead of selling the ag commodity, the producer transfers ownership of the livestock or grain directly to Nebraska Community Foundation for the benefit of their local affiliated fund. The producer can then claim all their production costs as deductible expenses for income tax purposes. When a producer transfers legal ownership to a charity before it is sold, the producer will not have taxable income from a sale, thus minimizing taxes. Tax savings may be realized on federal income tax, state income tax and self-employment tax, depending on the producer's specific circumstances.

It is important to first check with your professional advisor to determine whether a contribution of grain or livestock is appropriate for your tax situation. It is also important that you notify Nebraska Community Foundation in advance of making your gift of commodities as there are specific (but simple) procedures that must be followed. Gift of Grain and Livestock forms are available through members of the Fund Advisory Committee.

You can also visit Nebraska Community Foundation's Gift Planning website – www.ncfgift.org – to download the necessary forms. You can also find details on the benefits and process of making a charitable gift of grain or livestock, as well as other out-of-the-box giving methods beyond cash. Nebraska Community Foundation is also always available to point you in the right direction at (402) 323-7330 or info@nebcommfound.org.

Jeff Yost is CEO of Nebraska Community Foundation. Learn more about NCF's work at Nebraska-Hometown.org.

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KAAPA Ethanol: 25 Years and Still Growing

LORI POTTER, SPECIAL TO THE COURIER

MINDEN - Ever since a group of farmers and other investors founded KAAPA Ethanol LLC in February 2001, there's been growth in all aspects of the original business focused on buying corn grown in south-central Nebraska to process and sell as two higher-valued products: ethanol as fuel and distillers grains as livestock feed.

The plant west of Minden started with an annual ethanol production capacity of 40 milliion gallons a year. Now its 85 million gallons, plus 500,000 tons of distillers grains a year.



CHUCK WOODSIDE

Production of more products has required more corn - about 29 million bushels per year now - and more ground and building storage.

Last year, KAAPA officials focused on road improvements. This year, it's grain storage and movement.

The 2026 addition on the east end of the property south of Highway 6 is a grain storage building with a capacity of 4 million bushels of corn and a leg to increase dumping speed, said KAAPA Ethanol Chief Executive Officer Chuck Woodside.

"We need the space, but we also need the dumping capacity," he said, which will be 30,000 bushels per hour. He added that there still wiil be large ground piles of corn.



The Minden and Aurora ethanol plant sites aren't the only KAAPA properties with new construction projects. Chief Executive Officer Chuck Woodside said the staff has outgrown its headquarters southeast of Kearney - site of the old Grandpa's Steakhouse - and hopes to move into a new adjacent two-story building in November. (Courier photo by Lori Potter, Special to the Courier)

Builder Greenfield Construction is a subcontractor of Keen Engineering and Construction based at Ankaney, Iowa. The new facility was ready for fall harvest season.

A 3.8 million bushel corn storage project at the Aurora ethanol plant, which is managed by and majority owned by KAAPA Ethanol, which has a production capacity of 120 million gallons per year. The expanded corn storage facilities are two large outside pits built by Habco Inc.of Salina, Kansas.

KAAPA Ethanol also has owned and improved the 135 million-gallon-capacity Ravenna plant since purchasing it 10 years ago.

Expanding Markets

In a year filled with uncertainty related to drought, the Iran War, tariffs and lots of political swings, Woodside said, "We're in constant communication with our customers."

Although low corn prices help with input costs, "we don't root for cheap corn," he said. "Some of our highest corn price years were some or our best. We've always been in the black."

Ethanol fuel has been strong in the markets, compared to high-priced oil. Canada is the biggest importer of U.S. ethanol, at 600 million to 700 million gallons a year.

Woodside said Indonesia is a new importer at 100 million gallons a year. That deal was made earlier this year during a Nebraska trade mission there led by Gov. Jim Pillen.

However, the biggest growth market soon will be realized in California, where recent legislation passed unanimously by both houses of that state's legislature resolved the final issue to allow year-round use of E15 there. "The market there is open to E15," Woodside said, noting that the legislation resolved issues related to California's standards for hose equipment required on gas pumps' vapor recovery systems.

He said Californians can now save 47 cents per gallon by using E15 (allowed for use in 2001 or newer vehicles) instead of E10, or up to $2.7 billion overall.

Work continues to achieve the same results in other states that don't







yet allow year-round E15 sales..

Lower prices for ethanol, especially with the Iran War-driven prices for oil, and other biofuels could generate an enormous market, Woodside said.

"We have to give consumers the choice for E15 year round," he added, with nationwide approval. "We don't know the effects of that, but we'll never know without trying ...and to get all the uncertainty off the table."

Nebraska, KAAPA Ethanol Leaders

It is certain that KAAPA's three plants help make Nebraska the second largest ethanol producing state with approximately 3 billion gallons of annual production capacity from two dozen plants employing roughly 1,000 people.

According to the Nebraska Ethanol Board, those plants combined represent $14 billiion in capital investment and have an estimated $6.6 billion impact on the state's annual economy.

The plants also use 750 million bushels of corn annually and produce 9.5 million tons of distillers grains for livestock feed.

No one could have anticipated the size of today's Nebraska ethanol industry in 1992 when Archer Daniels Midland Co. built the first two plants at Columbus.

Or imagined KAAPA Ethanol's growth since its formation in 2001 and the start of operations at the Minden plant in November 2003.

"I don't think any of us imagined that the company would have grown to the size it is today," Woodside said, noting that original goals were to build an ethanol plant and then the industry gave KAAPA opportunites to grow.

One growth area is employment, with a total of 180 employees at all locations now. That has created the need for another large construction project at the Kearney headquarters southeast of the I-80 exit where the well-known Grandpa's Steakhouse once was located.

Woodside said the headquarters staff needs more room, which was made even more clear this summer when KAAPA had eight interns there. So construction of a new adjacent building is nearly completed.

"The compliance and registration parts of the business have grown," he said. Also, IT needs once were handled by one employee now require three.

Local businesses Wilkins Architecture and Design Planning, and Sampson Construction are in charge of the expansion project and had built the original headquarters. Woodside said it's hope the new space will be ready by November.

KAAPA ETHANOL PLANTS

MINDEN:

Ethanol capacity - 85 million gallons
2025 total - 85 million gallons
Bushels of corn per year - 29 milliion
Distillers grain tons per year - 500,000
Grain storage (including new building) - 2 million bushels, elevator; 4 million bushels in the new flat storage building; and 5 million bushels in ground piles

RAVENNA:

Ethanol capacity - 135 million gallons
2025 total - 135 million gallons
Bushels of corn per year - 45 million
Distillers grain tons per year - 750,000
Grain storage - 2.5 million bushels, main elevator, and 7.6 million bushels, ground piles.

AURORA:

Ethanol capacity - 120 million gallons
2025 total - 120 million gallons
Bushels of corn per year - 40 million
Distillers grain tons per year - 500,000
Grain storage (including new flat covered storage) - 2 million bushels, main elevator; 3.8 million bushels of new storage; and 2 million bushels in ground piles.
PLUS Elm Creek elevator corn storage - 4 million bushels



(Left) The new KAAPA Ethanol plant building has added storage space for 4 million more bushels of corn and a leg to increase dumping speed. The plant west of Minden also stores 2 million bushels in its elevator and 5 million bushels in ground piles.

(Above) Whether they were on the ground or high in the rafters, construction workers at KAAPA Ethanol's new 4 million-bushel corn storage building at the plant west of Minden were dwarfed by the size of the spaces where they worked.

(Right) The new storage building features a concrete above-ground base and lots of steel framework for a tarp cover to protect up to 4 million bushels of corn.

(Courier photos by Lori Potter, Special to the Courier)





Extension News - Horticulture

By Elizabeth Exstrom, M.S.

Central Nebraska Extension Horticulture Educator and Certified Arborist

Timing Is Everything When Controlling Weeds

The saying, "Timing is everything," could never be more true when it comes to weed control. Proper timing of herbicide applications can save you the frustration of dealing with a lawn full of weeds while also providing better control of those pesky plants. Properly identifying the weed and understanding its life cycle are important steps in selecting the best control method and getting the greatest results.

Know Your Weed

Knowing what type of plant you are dealing with is crucial to controlling it. Annual weeds require a different approach than perennial weeds.

Annual weeds sprout, grow, flower, produce seed, and die within one year. Annual weeds can be divided into three categories based on when they typically germinate. Spring annuals, such as crabgrass, germinate in the spring. Summer annuals, such as knotweed and sandbur, germinate later in the season. Winter annuals, such as henbit, germinate in late summer or fall, overwinter, and resume growth the following spring.

Each type of annual weed has different temperature and environmental requirements for germination.

Perennial weeds, on the other hand, continue to grow year after year. Plants such as clover and ground ivy can survive from year to year through their crowns, roots, stolons, or other plant structures.

Timing Herbicide Applications

There are several options for controlling weeds. Knowing the weed's life cycle and when it germinates can help determine the best time to apply a herbicide.

Preemergence herbicides are used primarily to prevent annual weed seeds from germinating, or sprouting. By stopping weeds before they emerge, these products can prevent them from becoming a problem in the first place. However, once a weed has germinated and begun growing, a preemergence herbicide is generally no longer effective at controlling that established plant.

Preemergence herbicides are also not effective for controlling established perennial weeds because these plants survive from year to year through their crowns, roots, stolons, or other structures rather than relying solely on new seedlings.

Postemergence herbicides are commonly used after weeds have germinated. Just like with preemergence herbicides, timing is important.

Early-season control of many weeds can provide better results. However, the best timing depends on the weed you are trying to control. For example, summer applications of broadleaf herbicides on perennial weeds may only injure or burn back the foliage temporarily. The plant may then produce new leaves and continue growing.

For many perennial broadleaf weeds, fall is an excellent time for control. As temperatures cool, perennial plants begin moving resources down into their roots and other storage structures in preparation for winter. Herbicide applications made at the appropriate time can move into these plant parts, resulting in better control.

On the other hand, applying herbicides to annual weeds late in their life cycle may provide little benefit. The herbicide may kill the plant only a few weeks before it would have naturally died from frost, while the plant may have already produced and dropped viable seeds. Knowing the weed you are targeting will help determine when herbicide control is most worthwhile.

Don't Forget the Elbow Grease

Herbicides aren't the only option for controlling weeds. Manually removing weeds may require a little elbow grease, but it can be an effective method of postemergence control.

Hand pulling or digging takes time, but removing weeds from the landscape also removes the developing or ripening seeds. When possible, remove the entire root system or as much of it as possible, and get the plant out of the landscape before it has an opportunity to produce or drop seeds.

Solarization for Large Areas

If you have a large area with an overwhelming weed problem and are considering completely rejuvenating the area, soil solarization may be an option.

With solarization, clear plastic is placed tightly over the soil surface for an extended period during the warmest part of the year. Heat from the sun builds beneath the plastic and can kill many weed seeds, seedlings, and some plant structures near the soil surface. For the greatest benefit, solarization is generally done over a large area for much of the growing season.

Be Patient

Patience is important when dealing with some weeds. You may think you have controlled a problem one year, only to see it reappear several years later.

Some troublesome weeds, such as Asiatic dayflower and puncturevine, can produce seeds that remain viable in the soil for several years. These seeds can sit in the soil until the right conditions occur for germination. Just when you think you have the problem under control, another flush of weeds may appear.

Stay vigilant and continue removing or controlling weeds before they have a chance to produce more seeds. Over time, you can gradually reduce the number of viable weed seeds in the soil and gain better control of the problem.

Proper identification, timing, and selecting the right control method are the keys to successful weed management. Take some time to identify the weed before reaching for the herbicide, and make sure the timing and treatment match the weed's life cycle. With a little planning—and maybe some elbow grease—your weeds might finally meet their match.

Elizabeth Exstrom is a Horticulture Extension Educator with Nebraska Extension in Hall County. For research-based gardening information, contact Elizabeth at elizabeth.exstrom@unl.edu, visit huskerhort.com, or follow HuskerHort on Facebook and Twitter.

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Staying Safe During Harvest

AMY TIMMERMAN, EXTENSION EDUCATOR

We have started harvest across the state and the famous words of "Be Safe!" are being said as loved ones walk out the door. We are also reminded on the radio or social media to "slow down" with all the machinery on the road and not being fully aware when or where they are turning.

These are all great comments and thoughts as we start our day; however, when we are in the heat of harvest, stress levels are high and with little sleep, accidents still happen.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 368 farmer and farm workers who died from work-related injuries in 2020. This translates to 18.0 deaths per 100,000 workers. Transportation incidents are the leading cause of death for these farmers and farm workers.

Roadway Travel

To put in perspective how quickly drivers come onto farm equipment, if a vehicle is traveling 65 mph, and a combine is half of a mile ahead and traveling at 15 mph in the same direction, it would take 36 seconds for your vehicle to meet the combine. When we cut that distance to a fourth of a mile, it only takes 18 seconds. With all the potential distractions drivers face on the road, it is easy to understand how an accident can occur. Here are some tips to keep everyone to safe.

Farmers

Verify that all lights and flashers on your farm equipment are working properly.

Use warning flashers, flags, lights and slow-moving vehicle emblems on all equipment.

Apply reflective tape to machines to improve visibility to motorists at dust.

Avoid traveling after sunset and times when more traffic is expected, such as the start and end of school days.

Avoid parking on roadways, but if it's necessary to do so, be sure proper safety lights are used.

If it's muddy, clean tires and equipment well enough to avoid leaving mud on the roadway.

Be mindful of the height of your farm equipment and avoid power lines, low bridges and other overhead obstacles.

Check your towed equipment. All loads should be balanced and securely mounted.

Transport combine head separately form the combine when moving on a roadway.

Use turn signals and hand signals whenever possible to communicate with fellow drivers.

Check traffic before turning to assure fellow drivers are not passing you.

Avoid driving distractions.

Stay aware of fellow drivers.

Auto Drivers

Be patient. Harvest occurs during a short period of time. Farmers will pull large equipment to the edge of the road to allow you to pass when available.

Farm equipment and tractors drive at a much slower speed, typically between 5-15 mph.

Leave as much room as possible when meeting large equipment on the road. If the shoulders are in good shape, use them.

Expect large equipment to take wider turns and even travel into both lanes to properly turn.

Do not pull out in front of farm equipment and suddenly slow down. Making sudden stops can be impossible due the size of the equipment and potential heavy loads they are carrying.

Watch for turn signals, hand signals and other ways a farmer or rancher may try to communicate with you.

When passing machinery, be sure to double check for oncoming traffic, slow down and look for turn signals if the equipment has them. Remember that the farmer may be unable to see behind them, making passing very dangerous.

Grain Handling Safety

As crops are being harvested from the field, farmers will be handling and storing this grain at various locations.

According to the 2020 Summary of U.S. Agricultural Confined Space-Related Injuries and Fatalities, there were a total of 64 cases of documented grain storage facility injuries. Out of those 64 cases, 35 were grain entrapments, seven were falls into or from grain storage structures, four asphyxiations due to deficient oxygen levels or toxic environments, and 12 equipment entanglements (involving in-floor and sweep augers) while working around confined grain storage. Beyond injuries related to grain storage facility, injuries also occur around the augers outside the storage facility.

Here are some tips on precautions to take this year:

Entrapment/Engulfment

Always lockout and tagout unloading equipment before entering a bin.

Never work alone in a bin. Have someone watching who can call for help.

Always wear a harness or lifeline. A body harness is the best option because it spreads the force of a fall or a tug of the rope across a larger area of the body. Do not walk down the grain.

Never enter a bin while an auger is running.

Electrical/Electrocution/Fire

Ensure all warning labels are in place, visible and being followed.

Check wire between circuit breakers and auger motor and internal motor wiring for wear and repair if needed.

To prevent unintentional grounding, use ground-fault circuit interrupters.

Lockout/tagout equipment before servicing.

Completely lower portable augers before moving to avoid hitting electrical lines.

Check bins for grain condition and heating throughout the storage period.

Entanglement

Guards should be free of holes, dents or deformations.

Keep hands, feet, hair and clothing away from moving parts of the auger.

Avoid wearing loose clothing, jewelry and hair.

Shutdown the equipment prior to doing any type of maintenance.

Turn augers off when there is a person physically pushing grain out of a truck, wagon, etc. when emptying. If the individual accidentally slipped and fell through the unload gate, they land directly into the auger hopper.

Block tires and lock raised beds. Lock hydraulics and mechanisms.

Falls

Use the "3-4-1 Triangle" for ladders. Extend the ladder three feet above the surface for every four feet of height and place the ladder one foot away from surface.

Improve bin ladders by adding cages and raise the bottom of the ladder so children cannot reach the bottom rail.

Add handrails at the end of the ladder, which provides easier transfer to the roof. Also, additions of guardrails along the roof ladder if possible.

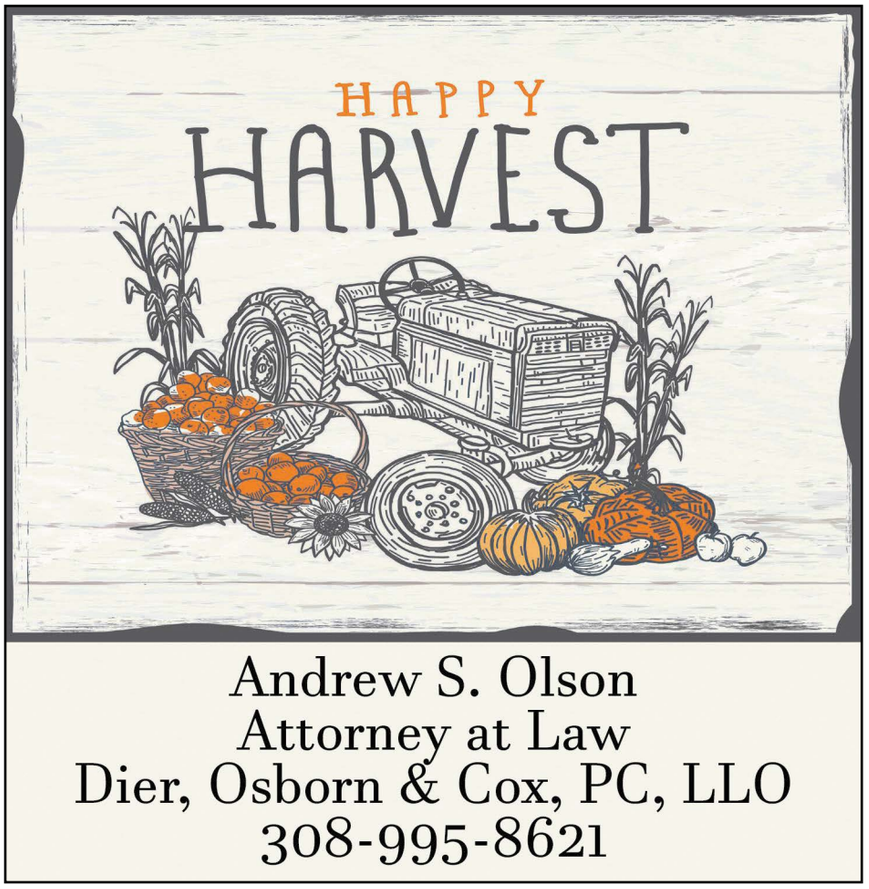
Grain Dust/Respiratory

Have the correct and clean air filters in place in operating combines.

Avoid direct exposures to dust whenever possible.

Wear a NIOSH-approved and certified "N-95" dust mask.

By following these precautions and slowing down this fall, you can keep everyone safe.



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THIS HARVEST, WE ALL HAVE A ROLE.

Slow down. Stay alert. Keep our community safe.

Stay Alert
Harvest means more tractors, trucks & combines on the road. Expect the unexpected!

Slow Down
Farm equipment moves much slower than you think. Give yourself time to react.

Watch Intersections
Always approach blind corners & hilltops with extreme caution.

Be Patient
Passing can wait. Coming home safe cannot.

Encourage family and friends to look twice, take extra time and share the road with farm equipment!