

Collecting, analyzing yield data is key at harvest time

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LINCOLN—Collecting yield data for crops like corn, soybeans and wheat at harvest time is an important step when it comes to precision ag management techniques, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension precision ag specialist says.

Yield data collected from yield monitors allows producers who have been doing precision ag management to evaluate year to year what is happening in their fields, and, more specifically, within management zones in those fields, said Joe Luck, UNL Extension precision ag specialist.

Yield monitor calibration is one of the most important aspects of collecting that data, and it's often overlooked by many producers at harvest time, he said.

"It is important that yield monitors are calibrated for every different crop that producers harvest," Luck said. "If you are harvesting corn, you need to perform a calibration for corn, if you switch to soybeans, you need to perform a calibration for that and so forth.

"If you want to get the most accurate data, you want to have a good calibration for that crop."

Luck said another thing that is becoming very important right now is "cleaning" the yield data, or removing the errors from that data.

"This has become a very important part of the process as people try to get really accurate information from their fields," he said. Producers have been using yield monitors for more than 20 years, but the systems haven't changed very much and still tend to generate some errors.

He said there is a software program available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture called Yield Editor that can help remove those errors.

"This is becoming very important as producers use yield data to develop new prescription layers

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– for example nitrogen recommendation based on yield information from the previous year – it is important to have accurate yield data to move that process forward,” he said.

Luck also recommends producers become familiar with the capabilities of farm management software to bring in yield data from the harvester, display that data and then perform some sort of analysis of that data. Even if producers are going to allow a trusted advisor to manage their data, understanding how that process works will result in better communication about the goals for their operation.

For more information about the best precision agriculture management practices, visit precisionagriculture.unl.edu or read the “Checks and Adjustments to Ensure Quality Yield Data Collection” article in this week’s CropWatch, UNL Extension’s crop production newsletter, at <http://go.unl.edu/cwprecision>.