

## Farmers find ways to salvage corn

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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### **Maxwell: Harvest costs double as combines pick up downed ears**

After ferocious winds ripped off ears and toppled cornstalks in mid October, many area farmers have tried to harvest what they could.

Or received insurance payments to recover some of the cost of the crop.

With the price of corn hovering between \$7 and \$8 a bushel, however, and thousands of acres yet to harvest, producers considered what could be gained by going after fallen corn.

Shane Maxwell, store manager of Landmark Implement Co., visited with several farmers after the Oct. 18 windstorm about options.

Because the dealership doesn't sell the type of equipment needed to collect fallen corn, Maxwell put them in touch with an implement company in Scottsbluff that specializes in such equipment.

He said the majority who chose to salvage their crop bought V-rakes to pull behind tractors. The rake pulls stalks into piles or windrows.

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Pick-up bean heads were also purchased that attach to combines to retrieve ears from the ground.



Maxwell said V-rakes range in price from \$30,000-\$50,000 with bean heads costing \$25,000-\$28,000.

The cost climbs higher with the purchase of perforated screens installed in combines that help shield dirt and debris scooped up with the bean head.

“Even with the screens, you’re taking dirt and debris into the combine and that requires a lot of maintenance,” Maxwell said.

And stalks and clumps of dirt still cause the combine to plug even with screens.

More runs through the field at much slower speeds, first with a tractor and then with the combine, adds to fuel cost plus wear and tear on equipment.

On average, Maxwell said combines depreciate \$240 an hour.

“So you’re doubling harvest costs,” he said.

Other growers are using flail choppers to bail corn and plant material, or just stalks, to sell to feedlots.

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Producers must be mindful of the amount of corn left in the fields if cows are grazed since too much can cause illness or death.

Getting as much corn out of the field now is important for next spring to prevent large areas of volunteer corn.

“Some farmers have over 180 bushels per acre on the ground,” Maxwell said. “They’ll never get it all picked up.”

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