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Crop prices strain land market **Page 6**

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REEL TIME: Keith Beam, who farms with his brother Kent; his father, Don; and Don VanTress, may only use the Hawkins reel once every 10 years. However, the time it has saved him from unplugging the combine is well worth the cost, he says.

By **TIM WHITE**

THE 75 mph after-blow of Hurricane Ike was still whistling through Clinton County when Don Beam knew he had trouble. "In all my years of farming, I've never seen a wind like that one," he says. "I sat on the porch and watched it knock down the corn rows."

"You could tell that wind was going to take down some of the corn," confirms his son Keith.

They weren't the only Buckeye farmers to come to that realization. The calls from Ohio started coming to Wayne Karschner of Hawkins Mfg. in Holdrege, Neb., that same night. By Monday the day before the Farm Science Review, he had taken 141 orders for corn reels and sold out his entire planned production run for the year.

Key Points

- Corn reels provide help with down corn.
- Reel sales boomed in Ike's aftermath.
- Drought stress exacerbated the problem.

"It was the talk of the Farm Science Review," says Karschner, who exhibited at the show for the second time this year. The Hawkins model, as well as a reel made by Kelterman Co. and the DG Crop Sweeper, were in high demand. Don's other son, Kent Beam, who is the sales manager for J.D. Equipment in Wilmington, took orders for 30 corn reels the day after the big wind.

"Altogether at the six J.D.

stores, we sold about 100 corn reels," Kent says. "We got 41 sent to us in our first shipment from Hawkins."

"J.D. Equipment had sold one of the reels last year, so they had one satisfied customer to build on," Karschner says. "That got them in the door early."

Although corn reel attachments date back to the early 1970s, Karschner has been making them for only four years. "It's a proven way to pick up downed corn, but it's not something farmers tend to buy until they have a problem," he says.

Big demand

While other states also were hit by wind damage, Ohio was Karshner's biggest customer by far this year. "When the corn is down, it [a corn reel] is some-

thing that farmers want in a hurry," he says. He called on suppliers to increase his production and fill orders that arrived during harvest.

"It's unfortunate that this year so many had to wait so long to get a reel. There just weren't enough ready to go."

The Hawkins model is mounted on hydraulics so it can be maneuvered up and down to push the corn into the combine header. "It takes some art to get it to nudge the corn into the header," says Keith. "But it sure beats getting out of the combine to unplug the header every few minutes."

The storm was hardest on drought-stressed corn that had died prematurely, resulting in weak stalks, and late-planted corn that had shallow, limited

root systems, according to Peter Thomison, an Ohio State University Extension agronomist. Harvest losses could range from a modest 1% to 5% per field, up to as high as 40% to 50%, depending on how badly the crop lodged.

Corn reels proved their value because it was important for growers to harvest severely wind-damaged fields as quickly as possible, Thomison says.

"Growers had to prioritize fields that had severely lodged corn for early harvest," he adds. "They needed to get those ears off the ground to limit further weathering losses."

Dry conditions throughout July and August set the stage for lodged corn, and the high winds from Hurricane Ike exacerbated the situation.

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