

## Crop Production

# 10 tips for making flat storage work

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**C**ORN will be coming out of your ears this fall if Mother Nature smiled on you. What do you do if you're short on space but don't want to

sell at harvest when basis is wide and prices are lower?

Your most obvious choices are flat storage in an existing building or piling corn outside. Piling corn outside is trickier, but there are farmers who make the most of it by providing aeration.

**TOO MUCH CORN:** Certain areas within the Midwest might have corn everywhere this fall.



Here's a closer look at preparing to store corn in existing flat structures. Thanks to Charles Hurburgh, director of

the Iowa Grain Quality Initiative at Iowa State University, and Dirk Maier, Purdue University grain-quality specialist, for their insights.

**1. Stay dry.** Whatever you do, concentrate on keeping grain dry and cool, Hurburgh says. "Ethanol plants don't want moldy grain," he adds.

**2. Find a roof.** Machine sheds are probably the first place you'll look for inside temporary storage.

"What you need is a roof and solid floor," Hurburgh advises. A non-leaking roof will provide better protection than going outside, even with a tarp.

**3. Opt for a solid floor.** Storing on concrete beats storing on a rock-based flooring. "It's tough to keep rocks from commingling with grain," Hurburgh says.

**4. Build a vapor barrier.** If the building has a dirt floor, lay down a plastic vapor barrier, Maier suggests. Placing a vapor barrier over a concrete floor is still a good idea, especially if the concrete is cracked. Ideally, invest in a concrete floor with a vapor barrier under it. However, concrete floors should cure for several weeks.

**5. Consider sanitation.** If the building previously contained manure, chemicals or petroleum products, it might not be possible to completely remove these materials and their odors, Maier notes.

**6. Have a pest plan.** Have a plan before you fill the building, Maier suggests. Birds and rodents are even bigger problems outside, but they'll cause headaches inside too if left unchecked.

**7. Use sidewalls.** If your toolshed wasn't designed to handle shelled corn, make modifications or only fill the center, Maier emphasizes. Reinforce using cables or self-supporting interior walls. Inquire about a "grain package" from a building company, or consult an engineering consultant for advice.

**8. Allocate wisely.** Pay attention to test weight, Hurburgh says. "Generally, the heavier the grain, the better the quality," he notes. Think about storing lower test weight grain in your bins. Grain with higher test weight should go in temporary piles if you're short on space.

**9. Balance it out.** At the same time, remember that grain harvested first will likely be warmer than normal. Since you can likely aerate better in your bins, bin first-harvested corn, and put later-harvested corn in temporary storage, assuming it's still good quality. "If you don't get the warmed grain cooled down, it will spoil," Hurburgh insists.

**10. Sell from temporary storage first.** "Sell grain from temporary storage before selling from bins," Hurburgh urges.



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