

Roland Harvesting has a wild ride in Worland



The header kept the combine from falling into the water.



The crane operators lifted up the combine until the front drive tires were on solid ground. Dad then drove the combine forward as the crane operator kept the rear of the combine off the bridge.



One of the header cylinders held much of the weight of the combine and was bent badly when the bridge broke.



Hazards of harvest rarely become a reality but when they do it is frightening for everyone involved.

Wednesday, August 10

For Roland Harvesting, our original game plan for Wyoming has been manipulated just a bit. Last week Brandon and James moved near Thermopolis, Wyo., to begin harvesting malt barley. The rest of us had planned to meet up with them but just as we were getting ready to leave home we had a last-minute job near Powder River, Wyo., to harvest wheat. Dad, Mom, Uncle Al (who is visiting for the week) and I hauled one combine and two of our semis to Powder River to start working.

Wyoming has been off to an interesting start for a couple of reasons. First off, most Wyoming grain elevators have low markets for wheat, simply because of the remote location and the high shipping costs. For this reason all of the wheat we harvested in Powder River was trucked over 200 miles back to Hay Springs, Neb. In order to compensate with the long haul we had to hire three trucks to help us keep up.

On Sunday, Brandon and James finished in Thermopolis and moved to Worland, Wyo., to harvest more malt barley. We also wrapped up in Powder River late that night.

Monday, August 15

On Monday, Brandon and James had just moved to Worland as the rest of our crew was loading up in Powder River to join the boys there. Dad received a phone call from Brandon just as we were about to load up the combine on the trailer. In a calm voice Brandon asked, "Dad, what should I do? The bridge just broke and the combine is still on it. I'm not sure what to do now. And it's not in the water...yet." As soon as Dad hung up the phone, we hopped in the pickup and began driving toward Worland.

An hour and a half after the initial phone call we finally reached the field. There were two barley fields that were less than 100 feet apart and were separated by a narrow bridge that stood over a major irrigation canal with running water in it. The combine had crossed over the bridge going the other way just one hour before with no problems what-



After the bridge collapsed under the front left drive tire, the rest of the combine slid in that direction, causing more of the bridge to break.

soever. On the way back over the choice was made to save time and risk leaving the header on the combine to cross the bridge. Perhaps this was too much weight for the old bridge to handle, because as the combine was halfway over the bridge the planks under the left front drive tire began to crack. The next thing Brandon knew, the entire combine was tilted over and the front left tire of the combine was almost in the water. Dad always checks the bridges before we cross them and we usually lay down reinforcing planks if he finds them necessary. Since our crew was split Dad wasn't around to do this part of the job.

Now speculating the accident after the fact one would assume if Brandon had just taken off the header, it would have lightened up the load enough that maybe the old bridge wouldn't have broken. However, we all believe that something more powerful intervened because when the combine slid, the header was the only thing on solid ground and it stopped the combine from tipping over into the canal. If the header had not been on and the bridge still broke, there is no doubt that the combine would have flipped off the bridge and rolled upside

down in the canal full of running water. If that had happened serious injury or a fatality could have occurred. Since the choice was made to leave the header on it ultimately saved Brandon's life.

We called in two local cranes from the oil fields to assist in lifting the combine up and off the bridge. The only major damage was one of the header cylinders getting bent and some light damage to an area of tin work where a cable rubbed when we attached it from one of the cranes.

In Wyoming, we constantly cross such bridges on an almost daily basis. The choice to do so is just another risk that comes along with our job. Harvest is filled with everyday hazards and we always try our best to avoid them. However, when accidents do happen, they make us stop and open our eyes again—making us realize how quickly things can go wrong and how important it is to be careful. Mom always says we have to count our blessings every day and let me tell you, at the end of that day we were counting them over and over again!

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Leon fixes a broken knife on his header.

Split Hoffman crews see wheat scab, flooding

Monday, August 8

Hoffman Harvesting is still split up but with the wet wheat in Bowdle, two of our combines moved to Faulkton to cut. The other two are still in Gettysburg. We received a little sprinkle in the morning but it cleared up and we were able to start cutting at noon.

Again, farmers are disappointed by the yield of their spring wheat crop. The wheat looks beautiful at a quick glance but the rain has created disease instead of a high yield. While not all fields are affected, most fields in the Faulkton and Gettysburg areas have vomitoxin, also known as scab. Yields are ranging from the upper 20s to 30s while the test weight is 50 to 52.

Tuesday, August 9

Hoffman Harvesting continues to cut in both Gettysburg and Faulkton. Things are somewhat slow going as the wheat has been lodged from too much rain. The weather continues to look like rain showers are potentially imminent but rain doesn't come. The only rain being forecasted is for Thursday. By then, we hope we will wrap up our spring wheat harvest in Faulkton and then rush to Roscoe to start working there.

Friday, August 12

Hoffman Harvesting is still split up. The guys continue

to cut in Gettysburg while the rest of the crew made the move to Roscoe and started cutting yesterday. As was promised to us, we received a rain shower last night. The rain didn't come as a shock as we had to shut down our machines before the sun went down. The humidity was so high, it made the wheat too tough to cut. We are still hoping that things will dry up enough to cut in the late afternoon. The wheat we are cutting in Roscoe is lodged and yielding from 30 to 45 bushels per acre. The protein is 16.

Sunday, August 14

Last night our guys wrapped up harvest in Gettysburg and got ready to move home. Today they will be able to cut our wheat in Bowdle. The rest of the crew continues to cut in Roscoe. The area is flooded. In fact, highway 12—a major road—is flooded. Our combines were actually cutting right beside the road that is flooded, which means we are surrounded by water and have been playing in the mud. The lodged wheat also continues to be a challenge.

On Saturday, we were unable to cut so we headed to Selby to help celebrate Mike Kraft of Kraft Harvesting's birthday. His wife and party planner, Wendy, invited a large group and had more food than can ever be imagined. These moments are what make harvest fun.

(Continued to Page 9-B)

Split Hoffman crews see wheat scab, flooding (Continued from Page 8-B)



Roscoe has had flooding problems all summer. The wheat is lodged, and the ground is wet all around our field.

Part of the Hoffman Harvesting crew moved home and began harvesting on the home front once again. I think my dad was happy to see them pull in the field and start cutting. Meanwhile the rest of the crew is still working away in Roscoe.

The spring wheat looks wonderful in South Dakota but the yield is much lower than farmers anticipated. The wheat we were cutting today was yielding in the 30s and is being hauled to the bins.

It feels like harvest is going

slow and that we are cutting farther north than we really are because the harvest days have been shorter than normal. We start cutting shortly before noon and end before the sun goes down. The culprit is an odd mixture of humidity and unusually cold August weather. When the wheat gets too tough to do a good job of cutting, you gotta quit no matter what time it is.

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Miseners move from wheat to oats

Wednesday, August 10

This past week it seems that animals are everywhere. About a month ago under the hood of one of our vehicles we found a kitten who was about to die of heat stroke. His little mouth was as far open as it could go and he was panting hard. Mom, Joel and I took pity on this half-starved kitten and we took him in and named him George. The plan was to keep him until he was big enough to fend for himself, but we all know that didn't happen. We've all become quite attached, and he's here to stay.

My sister Liz from Oklahoma (little Elizabeth and Leslie's mother), my sister Katie, and her family from Kansas, and my sister Marie, and her family from North Dakota all came and we had a family get together. It happened to be my mother's birthday, so it was nice that everyone could make it.

While we were sitting at the tables after lunch I happened to notice a Monarch butterfly trying to dry his wings on a nearby tree. I called the kids over to look, and they were fascinated by him and his beauty.

Later that same day the kids found a baby bird who was barely old enough to get around, sitting on a branch they were playing near

the field once. This year's oat crop has some broken stalks so we are basically cutting on the ground, but we are still dropping the straw so that the farmer can bale it up for bedding their horses or cattle. These oats are running about 12 percent moisture, 36 pound test weight and around 60 bushels per acre—pretty good oats.

Thursday, August 11

I would bet most of you that read about the lives of harvesters here at All Aboard Wheat Harvest expect to read about wheat, but this week we've had a little change of scenery. We have been cutting oats. For some it might sound strange to be straight cutting oats. Straight cutting means we cut it like we would wheat, with a normal flex head. It's a bit strange for me, too—but not unheard of. I haven't cut straight outs for eight to 10 years.

Typically oats are windrowed, and then a combine will pick up the rows with a pick up head. The stem or stalk of the oats is not strong enough to hold up the head, and this results in broken stalks with oats laying on the ground. To keep this from happening—and getting all the oats their crop has to offer—they will windrow the oats when they are green or two wet to cut.

This year we're able to straight cut and that means less time in the field and saving money on fuel cost because you only have to go over

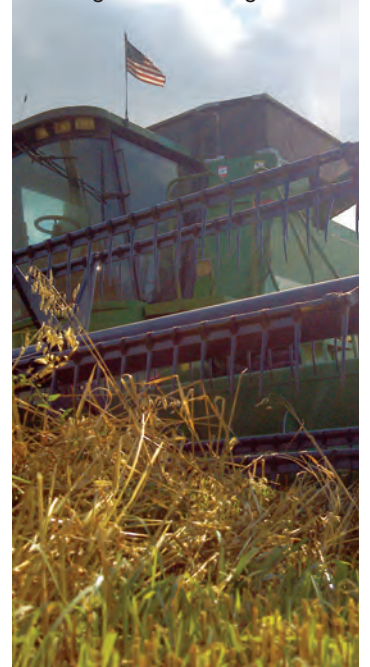
the field once. This year's oat crop has some broken stalks so we are basically cutting on the ground, but we are still dropping the straw so that the farmer can bale it up for bedding their horses or cattle. These oats are running about 12 percent moisture, 36 pound test weight and around 60 bushels per acre—pretty good oats.

We only have one day left of cutting, but it has to stop raining for us to finish. A couple of bad storms passed through these past few days and we actually had to go into the basement of the house we're staying near. There was hail and it did damage some fall crops around Gregory, S.D., but I think they should pull through. Some of the corn may not be as lucky. Fifty percent or more of the leaves were stripped off. I'm praying for those farmers, that their fall crops come back for a bountiful fall harvest.

Editor's note: Have you ever wondered how a combine works, how much custom harvesters' equipment costs, or what harvesters do in the winter? Find Emma's answers to readers' questions on the All Aboard Wheat Harvest blog at www.allaboardharvest.com.

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The standing oats are broken off, and that means cutting close to the ground.



Here is a harvest view taken from one of the farm's buttes.

Zeorian Harvesting moves to Montana

Monday, August 8

The Zeorian Harvesting crew is now in Big Sky country—but let me back up a bit. In my last post, we were still in Limon, Colo., battling rain, high moisture wheat and eventually weeds. I don't think we had one full day of cutting while in Limon because of those things, but we managed to finish the job in small increments by July 30.

After taking a day to clean equipment, the crew hit the road on Aug. 1 to begin the journey north to our next stop—Jordan, Mont. The trip from Limon to Jordan is the biggest of the summer, with nearly 700 miles between the two towns.

The crew made it as far as Scottsbluff, Neb., that night. It's always nice to be back in the home state, even if only for a little while! We got back on the road the next morning and drove all day, eventually stopping for the night in Miles City, Mont., which is only about 85 miles from Jordan, but about 85 miles too many for our sleepy drivers.

So we arrived in Jordan on Aug. 3. After setting up camp and getting things in order, our parents got in the semi and headed back south. As I've mentioned before,

for us each move requires two trips—so Mom and Dad trekked 700 miles back to Limon to get the rest of the equipment and then trekked 700 miles back to Jordan.

As of Saturday evening, the crew was once again reassembled in Jordan. The combine was unloaded and serviced, and ready to cut wheat. So that's what happened the next day—we cut wheat.

The fields we're cutting are only a couple of miles out of town, which sure makes things easy. There is no grain elevator here, though, so our farmer hires semis to haul the majority of the wheat to an elevator about 200 miles away.

(Have I mentioned that Jordan is basically in the middle of nowhere? The next "real" town—one with a grocery store—is 65 miles away.)

But being back in Jordan is like being back home. It's one of the stops that my great-grandparents made when they were custom harvesting, and one stop that we have never missed in at least my 23 years of memory.

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