

International Silo Association

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Preserve the Quality of Your Tower Silo

A drive around the countryside this time of the year will enable one to see farmers out working in their fields. According to the International Silo Association (ISA), this is also the time of year to focus on preventative maintenance on the tower silos that will store the harvest.

“Preventative maintenance on a tower silo helps ensure proper feed storage and is necessary for safety issues, as well as to preserve the quality of the tower silo,” said Leroy Shefchik, spokesperson for ISA. “If a common sense approach to silo maintenance is used, similar to how one cares for other equipment used on the farm, the result will be many years of trouble-free feed storage,” Shefchik added.

Many of the tower silos that owners are anticipating to use for their crop storage have been on the farm for many years. The tower silo may appear to be sturdy, strong and in good condition but with time and usage, maintenance is essential.

A 20 x 60 oxygen limited silo holds about \$94,000 of shelled corn at \$7.00 per bushel. A 20 x 80 poured concrete silo or concrete stave silo holds about \$40,000 of haylage at \$70 per ton. Considering the hours of labor, as well as the value of the crop itself, dairy and beef producers need to know that their feed storage system is in the best possible condition.

At a glance, the silo may look fine; however, the ISA recommends a thorough inspection of the outside of the tower silo, as well as the inside, prior to filling each year.

Conduct an inspection of the inside of the tower silo when it is empty. Check to make sure that all drains are open and working properly. Test near the bottom of the silo with a screwdriver to see if there is any deterioration of the concrete. It is important to take care of any repairs before damage to the concrete becomes serious.

When inspecting the outside of the tower silo, start by cleaning all debris buildup away from the area where the wall meets the foundation in order to check for erosion around the silo base. Next, make sure drains are not blocked and check that the slope will allow any surface water or silage juices to drain away from the silo base and foundation.

It is essential to make sure that the ladder and cage are in top condition at all times. Insure that all ladder hardware on both the inside and outside ladders, including the platform are secure and safe.

The safety of anyone working around a tower silo depends upon a thorough check of the hardware, including silo rods, lugs, nuts, doors and their latching mechanisms, fill pipe, gooseneck and brackets, unloader winch, tripod and the cable.

If you discover areas that need to be repaired, schedule your silo manufacturer early in the season to avoid last minute rush and scheduling difficulties. The ISA has a “Silo Operator’s Manual” which contains valuable information on silo maintenance, as well as the production of top quality silages. Copies can be obtained from your local silo dealer or contact ISA’s Spokesperson, Leroy Shefchik at 920-655-3301.

Remember that your feed is only as good as the silo it’s stored in.