**Maintenance Tip: Silo Footing Concerns**

**Presented as a Public Service for the purposes of Farm Safety**

**LET’S TALK SILOS - SILO SENSE - COMMON SENSE**

**For many years, tower silos have stood – like soldiers standing at attention – protecting farmers valuable feed crop – protecting it from not only spoilage but against contamination and other negative outside sources. Tower Silos have performed so well and for so long that often little attention is given to their value and importance on the farm, or to their maintenance.**

Seldom, if ever, is the standard silo footing put in below frost level. There’s an old saying; “It never freezes under a straw stack.” So even though silo footings don’t go down six feet below grade, the greatest majority of them perform well. But, be aware, there are concerns about silo footings that need attention.

It’s the moisture. Your silo footing needs to be well drained. Often times the barn or feed room roofs drain on top of the silo footing. These roofs need to be guttered to keep the water away. Many times, when two or more silos stand together, the water drains between them. A path for drainage away from the silo needs to be provided. When you saturate the ground around and under a silo footing, frost can be an issue. Also, saturated ground has less bearing capacity. It just makes good sense to keep the water away.

Unless you are building on a barn bank, it is recommended that the footing be above grade level. With a stave silo, this keeps the staves and hoops out of the ground. They last longer above grade and this makes footing inspection a lot easier. If footings are below grade, getting surface water away is critical.

Because of footing size, the way the concrete is placed and the loads the concrete needs to bear, footing concrete batch designs are normally less than silo wall concrete designs. This is a two-edged sword. Weaker batch designs are more apt to deteriorate faster, especially from silage leachate. Check your footing to see if the stones are showing. In many cases, footings have deteriorated enough that a trowel can be slid under the staves that sit on it. If this is the case the footing needs to be restored on the top.

**Your tower silo is protecting your valuable feed. It needs to be in top notch condition to do its job. You can’t expect it to do its job if it’s not maintained. And remember, water lines and drains should be rerouted around your silos. If they break, they may undermine your silo footing.**

Disclaimer

These articles are contributed by Bruce Johnson of Wisconsin Silos. They are meant to be informative and fun to read. They are not all inclusive. Your best source of information is the International Silo Association Operator’s manual or call the International Silo Associaton at 610-607-3622.