

Monitor Moisture During Cotton Harvest

To ensure safe storage conditions, seed-cotton moisture levels should be monitored during harvest using a moisture meter. Moisture readings are particularly important for cotton harvested early and late in the day when relative humidity is higher and seed-cotton moisture levels are also higher than during the mid-day hours. Check seed cotton moisture every day before starting your harvesters. It is a good practice to read the moisture of a sample two or three times and use an average value. Each successive reading should be taken after the sample has been removed from the meter and reinserted. Remember, your goal is to only harvest cotton when its moisture content is twelve percent or lower.

If a moisture meter is not available, you can get an indication of seed-cotton moisture from the cottonseed. Bite the cottonseed, see if it readily cracks, and listen for a snapping sound. Cottonseed that readily cracks indicates the seed and lint can probably be stored safely, provided: (1) the seed cotton is free of high-moisture trash, (2) modules are well built and stored in dry, well drained areas (3) precautions are taken to protect the module from inclement weather during storage.

Module temperature should be checked in at least six locations on a daily basis for the first 5 to 7 days. Beyond that time, the probing can be done every 3 4 days or as the temperature dictates. The temperature probe should reach at least 2 1/2 ft into the module.

For modules that are harvested at safe moisture for storage, temperature will generally not increase more than 10-15 °F during the initial 5 to 7 days and may then level off and even cool as storage continues. A rapid and continuing rise in temperature of 15-20 °F or more during the first few days generally signifies a moisture problem. If a temperature of 120 °F is reached or if the temperature increases by more than 20 °F above ambient temperature when the module was being built, the module should be ginned immediately to avoid the possibility of major loss. Unless ginned immediately, high moisture modules (especially those harvested late in the season when ambient temperatures are low) may continue to increase in temperature at a slow rate over a period of several weeks. All modules should be inspected weekly and immediately following storms to detect damaged or missing tarps, water ponds in depressions, or tarp leakage.

Water standing in depressions in the tarp, regardless of tarp material, should be drained off. If water has leaked into the module, the modules should be ginned as soon as possible.



<http://www.extension.org/pages/10506/cotton-harvest-management>