

How to store technology: Prep high-tech precision technology equipment before storage

The following is taken from portions of an article that appeared in the November/December 2009 issue of Implement & Tractor magazine:

When storing your equipment, a few extra steps can minimize problems when equipment outfitted with precision farming components is taken out of storage next season.

Here are tips to ready machines with technology until they head back to the field.

"We recommend taking touch-screen displays out of machines and storing them where they will not be exposed to extreme cold or heat," according to Nick Ohrtman, tech support supervisor for Ag Leader Technology. "Keeping touch screens away from extremes in temperature increases their longevity."

On combines equipped with yield monitoring systems, consider removing the mass flow sensor from the top of the clean grain elevator housing.

"Mice like to gnaw on the potting material on the load cell," Ohrtman says. "It's good insurance to take it out and store it in a place where rodents can't get to it."

Moisture meters for yield monitoring systems are finicky about exposure to moisture. Moisture meters that use small augers to move grain past sensing plates are susceptible to corrosion of the bushing plates or support housing. Disassemble the auger, then clean and lightly lubricate auger supports before storage.

Don't overlook precision components on seeding equipment. Automatic row shutoff systems on planters and seeders can seize up during off-season storage. Extremes in temperature and humidity encourage moisture to condense and corrode components.

Easy errors with air. Automatic row shutoffs use either electric clutches or pneumatic shutoffs. On systems that use electric clutches, use a blow nozzle and compressed air to clean accumulated dust and field debris from the exterior of actuating mechanisms before storage.

"On our electric clutches, tuck the spray straw from a can of WD-40 or other light lubricant under the rubber seal and give it a short squirt," says Jeff Dillman, inventor of Tru Count row shutoff systems. "Don't blow them out [internally] with [compressed] air because it might force dust and grit into the wrong places. Just give each clutch a brief squirt of WD-40, then actuate the clutch and manually turn the shaft to distribute the lube so everything will be free when you take it out of storage."

On row shutoff systems that use onboard compressed air systems to actuate row clutches, open the petcock on air storage tanks to drain condensed water.

Onboard air systems also have a small distribution manifold. Be sure to power up the air compressor and pressurize the manifold, then remove the air line from the manifold to purge accumulated moisture before storage.

Air-actuated row clutches benefit from targeted bursts of aerosol lubricant.

"There's a small port where you can stick the straw from a spray can and give each one a couple seconds squirt of lube," Dillman says. "The big thing is to cycle the clutch and turn the shaft a few revolutions to distribute the lube after you squirt it."

Dillman says it's also a good idea to apply dielectric "grease" to electrical connectors used in row shutoff systems and other precision farming wiring harnesses. Dielectric compound is a non-conductive, water-repellent lubricant. Connectors slide together more easily, and moisture and dust are excluded. The Vaseline-like compound prevents trace voltages from short-circuiting between pins inside the connector while actually improving metal-to-metal contact between pins and sockets.

"[Dielectric grease] is always a good idea for electrical connectors on farm equipment," Dillman says, "especially on electrical and electronic systems that sit outside for storage, or during rainy spells during their busy season."

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