

## Hail pounds, pounds, pounds

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

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Just when residents begin to rebound from the previous night's hailstorm, skies grow dark and yet another storm pounds the nearby area somewhere.

That's been the pattern this past week in Northeast Colorado and Southwest Nebraska.

Sunday, July 19 between 6:30-7:30 p.m., corn fields on the Phillips-Yuma county line southeast of Holyoke took a real beating from hail.

Walt Bradford and Steve Hayes both reported the storm sort of snuck up on them. It didn't even feel as if it was going to rain.

All of a sudden, torrential rains, accompanied by hail falling straight down, pounded for more than 15 minutes. Hayes said it looked like a heavy, wet snowstorm.

In that short period, they received 1.1 inches of rain. Hail started out pea-size, with some being shooter marble size, said Hayes. Bradford said the biggest share of the hail stones at their home, two miles west of the Hayes' place, were small grape size.

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Hayes admitted they were pretty fortunate, compared to Bradfords, but their beans were beat up badly.

Bradford said the four circles of corn near their home are probably 100 percent loss. Three of those are leased by Spragues, and the Bradfords farm the fourth. Other fields in that area were also extensively beat up by the hail.

Bradford said Monday he probably would have started seeing tassles that day, had the previous night's storm not hit. Describing the corn before the hail, Bradford said it was "really nice." He had just put the last load of fertilizer on it.

Erik Vieselmeyer, local Pioneer seed dealer, said corn destruction at this point of growth is devastating, as all crop inputs have gone into the corn (fertilizer, insecticides, etc.).

Leaves are the main working part of a corn plant's food factory, converting solar energy into grain. As a result, losses are highest near the tasseling stage, according to a Pioneer Tech Update Hail Decision Guide.

Leaves on the corn plants convert sugar into starch and produce grain. When leaves are taken off at this stage, it damages test weights.

With corn in the 16-leaf to 18-leaf stage, right before tasseling as it is now, there's just not a lot of growth time to recuperate from the leaf loss from hail.

The Pioneer Hail Decision Guide references corn at a 16-leaf stage of growth, with 50-60 percent leaf loss from hail, will represent about an 18-23 percent yield loss.

**Friday storms hit full area**

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Sunday's hail southeast of Holyoke came on the heels of multiple storms in the area Friday, July 17.

Around 6:30 p.m. in Holyoke, a 30-minute solid downpour of rain blinded the view, and was accompanied briefly by pea-sized hail. From 6-10 miles straight south of Holyoke, corn fields were damaged by hail in that same storm surge.

Earlier Friday, across the state line in Chase County, Neb., the community of Imperial was hit by a hailstorm around 6 a.m. and two more during the noon hour. The south sides of buildings suffered extreme damage, and fields in the country were hit, as well.

### **Storm pattern continues Monday**

As if there hadn't been enough stormy weather, the skies darkened yet again at the end of the business day, about 5 p.m. in Holyoke Monday, July 20. High winds geared up briefly, with storm conditions moving on.

At about that same time, in Champion, Neb., golf-ball to tennis-ball size hail pounded the small community in southwest Chase County. Champion resident Sharon Raasch reported windows were broken out on the north sides of homes. Crops in the area were ravaged, as well.

At 4 p.m. Monday in Grant, Neb., northeast of Holyoke, hail pounded the town, as well as surrounding fields. Grant and Perkins County also bore the brunt of a noon hailstorm Friday.