

# TALKIN' COTTON

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It seems like our cotton harvest this year has been one step forward and two steps back. Just when the soil dries out enough to support a harvester, we get to harvest one or two days, then another rainfall that will keep us out of the field for another week. The continued rainfall and high humidity this fall have not allowed bolls to finish opening and dry down, so we have a lot of hard-lock bolls that when they finally do dry down, they will not fluff out and will be susceptible to falling on the ground during harvesting. Most of these problems are beyond our control, but there are a few things we can do to minimize the damage and harvest the highest quality under these conditions.

Normally, our first suggestion is to try to stay out of the field until the fiber, seed, and the bur are dried out. Our soils are so saturated that usually when the soil dries out, the bolls are ready. A few sunny days on a field of rained on cotton will normally allow the cotton to fluff and bleach some which will increase the color grade.

If harvest aids have not been applied, and if you cannot crack harvestable bolls on the plant, a boll opener is normally justified. Bolls that won't crack open will likely not open if a freeze occurs. If the abscission layers have been set and they will crack open with finger pressure, a boll opener will not be needed. In case of a hard freeze, these bolls will likely open by desiccation of the outside of the boll.

Next we need to deal with green leaves on the plant. If harvest aids have been applied two or three weeks ago, many of these fields have a flush of regrowth in the top of the plant. If the top growth isn't too severe, harvest with a picker can usually be done without much of a problem, but if you are going to use a stripper, this top growth will need to be desiccated. Aim, ET, Blizzard, or Gramoxone can be used as a desiccant to dry down this top regrowth. If a hard frost or a freeze is in the forecast, it will do the same job as a desiccant.

Cotton that has been harvested so far has been higher yield and quality than expected. Hopefully, we can be a little patient, get a little cooperation by the weather, and somehow pull out of the situation we are in.

*TALKIN' COTTON is produced by NTOK Cotton, a cotton industry partnership which supports and encourages increased cotton production in the Rolling Plains of North Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. For more information on the cotton scene, see [okiecotton.org](http://okiecotton.org) and [ntokcotton.org](http://ntokcotton.org). For questions or comments on Talkin' Cotton, contact [eventerprise1@hughes.net](mailto:eventerprise1@hughes.net).*