

Lights, camera, harvest

Wireless cameras and monitors give harvest operators another set of eyes to relieve stress

Roger Luebbe uses a lot of equipment when he harvests grain, but one of the most useful gadgets may also be one of the smallest.

A year ago he set up a wireless camera on his combine pointed at the top of the 1,100-bushel auger wagon that would arrive for on-the-go grain dumping. A wireless monitor sits inside the auger wagon's tractor cab so the operator there can change speeds to ensure no spillage during the grain transfer.

"This speeds up the operation," says Luebbe, who farms 2,500 acres of corn, seed corn and soybeans, and serves as manager at the Husker Harvest show in Grand Island, Neb. "It makes it less stressful for the combine operator during unloading. He doesn't have to watch two places at once. The guy in the tractor can see how full the wagon is through the monitor."

When Luebbe fills semitrucks, there's another wireless camera mounted on the auger wagon's tractor roof. By switching the monitor to another channel, filling the truck becomes a one-man operation.

With combines and trucks set for harvest, farmers are finding new ways to relieve the stress of on-the-go grain transfer. And when you're on the road, there's nothing worse than not knowing what's behind your combine or semitruck as you make a left-hand turn.

Bruce Speich, Milnor, N.D., uses wireless cameras to keep an eye on



Bruce Speich, Milnor, N.D., checks traffic with help from a digital camera mounted at the rear of his semi.

traffic behind his semitruck.

"When we're hauling hay, our loads can be pretty wide," says the corn, soybean, wheat and alfalfa grower. "I thought about building a bracket for rear-view mirrors, but they vibrate too much and they have to be extended out too far. So we put a camera on the back of the semi to watch traffic behind us."

Speich also uses the cameras for

on-road grain-cart transport as well as on baler tractors to monitor hay pickup, "so we don't have to crank our head around so much."

Speich bought his outfit from AgCam (www.agcam.com). A kit with a 7-inch monitor, camera, and 20- and 60-foot cables, along with A/C, 12V and hardwire power adaptors, retails for \$1,029. AgCam also sells wireless transmitters and receivers, video servers for Internet viewing, and quad processors to monitor four cameras on one screen.

The AgCam equipment can be easily moved from one setup to another. "The cameras have a real good magnetic base to them, so if you have a good chunk of iron, they'll stick," says Speich.

Speich has even used a vice grip to mount a camera pointed at gauges mounted at the back end of his anhydrous tank during sidedressing. That way he doesn't have to jump off the tractor every few minutes when he thinks he's running low.

"The only real limitation is your own imagination," he says. 