

## When the crop's not worth heading

If Mother Nature spoils a potentially good grain harvest, either from overly dry conditions that fail to produce head, or late season weather damage, you can still salvage the situation and turn a failed crop into saleable fodder.

### Benefits of using a finger wheel rake

Cereal hay farmers already know the benefits of using a finger wheel V-rake. They cover large areas efficiently, and they are gentle on the grain so the head stays intact. Importantly, if the ground is furrowed, a V-rake can roll along the ridged seed drill lines, gently passing the crop from one wheel to the next with minimum soil contamination of the crop. Rotary rakes are less than ideal on this soil profile, tending to scarify the ground and causing contamination.

### Salvaging a failed grain crop

For a farmer with a failed grain crop, a finger wheel rake is a cost-effective solution for salvaging crops. V-rakes cost less than a rotary rake and work faster so fodder can be produced very efficiently. They are also a solid investment, with finger wheel rakes having a longer life than rotary rakes, particularly in broadacre paddocks. Maintenance is low with few complex mechanical parts.

Recognising that the decision to salvage crops for fodder is not always straightforward, the Department of Primary Industries has produced a useful tool to help producers make decisions:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/broadacre-crops/crop-salvage-calculator>

Drought affected crops can be high in nitrates, so quality checks should be done before using the fodder for cattle feed. There are also chemical withholding periods to be observed. The DPI provides a Feed Quality Service (FQS) for the analysis of animal feed:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/services/laboratory-services/feed-quality-service>

### Extra profit from straw sales

Even if you've had a great crop, a finger wheel rake can bring in extra profit from straw sales. Drought conditions have increased the use of feed mixers and straw provides good bulk and fibre for the mixed rations.

'To get the most out of finger wheel rakes, it's important to set them up at the right width and speed,' said Shane Ryan, Inlon's Product Manager. 'Trying to grab too much too quickly is counter-productive, ploughing rather than raking and bringing debris into the crop. If you set it too wide, you will also roll the forage like a rope, rather than carrying it gently along the wheels. Get the set-up right, and you can't beat a finger wheel rake for efficiently maximising yield.'

For over 30 years, Sitrex finger wheel rakes have been a solid performer in Australia for a wide range of hay and straw growers, as well as salvaging failed cereal crops. The Sitrex range starts from small linkage rakes for small scale growers through to large trailed V rakes for contractors and broadacre farmers.

For more information on Sitrex finger wheel rakes, visit [www.sitrex.com.au](http://www.sitrex.com.au)

