



Colorado State University Extension
Golden Plains Area Extension

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For Immediate Release

August 7, 2015

(Burlington, Colo.)

Seed Treatments Strongly Recommended for the Wheat Crop

As the wheat planting season approaches, it is recommended that growers treat seed with a fungicide before planting. Seed treatments control seed-transmitted diseases that lower yield and grain quality. These diseases include common bunt (also known as stinking smut) and loose smut.

The fungi that causes these two diseases infect seed or seedlings and grow within the plant until heading, at which time they invade the developing kernels and replace them with fungal spores. Common bunt in particular can lead to 100% loss because grain elevators usually will not accept common bunted grain.

Another group of seed-transmitted diseases causes root and crown rots and seedling blights. The fungi that cause these diseases infect grain during the heading and grain maturation stages. If grain affected by these fungi is not treated with a fungicide and is used as seed, severe root and crown rots and seedling blights can occur. Together with soilborne fungi that cause damping off, damage can result in uneven stands, bare patches in wheat fields and lower grain quality and yields

Benefits of treating wheat seed before planting

- A good stand establishment and healthy and vigorous seedlings optimize the opportunity for high yields.
- Diseases such as common bunt that lower grain quality and can lead to 100% loss are controlled.
- Root and crown rot diseases, seedling blights, and damping off which result in uneven stands and bare patches in fields are controlled.
- Treating seed with a fungicide-insecticide combo can reduce fall infections by insect-transmitted diseases such as the aphid-transmitted barley yellow dwarf virus.
- If systemic fungicides are used to treat seed, additional protection from fall foliar diseases is provided.

Treating seed

It is best to buy certified treated seed or use a commercial seed conditioner to clean and treat seed. Seed treated on-farm should be cleaned before treatment. Seed treatment equipment that attaches to trucks are available. These treatment devices treat seed as it is augured into drills, minimizing left over treated seed. Thorough coverage maximizes effectiveness of the seed treatment.

Due to the increased prevalence of seed-transmitted diseases this year, it is highly recommended that certified, treated seed be planted for next season's crop. If farmer-saved or bin-run seed must be used, it should be thoroughly cleaned and treated with a fungicide before planting.

Sources:

Stephen Wegulo, Nebraska's Extension Wheat Plant Pathologist
Bruce Bosley, Colorado State University (retired)

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