

Treated Seed Offers Insurance Against Threats

Start your season off right.

As the technology and the application of seed treatments is becoming more effective, growers are turning to treated seed to give their crop a fighting chance against seed and soil-borne disease and insects. Early seeding is becoming more common in Alberta, however seeding into cold soils can be risky – the seed sits in the soil longer and is vulnerable to threats below the ground. To combat that, seed treatments are helping growers start their season off right.

“Treating seed is a lot like insurance,” says Harry Brook, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. “Ideally, you’d be seeding into warm, moist soils for rapid emergence. But that’s the ideal and then there’s the reality. Early spring weather is unpredictable and growers have a lot of acres to cover. Seed treatments allow growers to seed when it works best for them without the negative impact early seeding can have on their crop.”

Brook says that ideally, soil temperatures would be a minimum of five degrees before seeding begins; however, today many growers attempt to seed as soon as the soil has defrosted. The general rule is the earlier a crop is seeded, the greater the yield potential. But that’s only true if it emerges strong and healthy. By keeping disease and insects at bay, seed treatments help offset the risks of a delayed emergence.

Some crops are treated more than others. Canola is treated with combination products that contain both fungicides and insecticides to combat soil-borne diseases as well as protection from flea beetle damage. For cereal growers, the use of seed treatments is becoming more of a requirement, as diseases such as smut, bunt, damping off and root rot are increasing in incidence. And as there is a resurgence of wireworms in Alberta, seed treatment insecticides for cereals become more important. The available seed treatment insecticides put the wireworms in a coma-like state so they are unable to feed during the critical period of emergence.

Tight rotations with little cropping variation have meant an almost province-wide buildup of disease inoculum in the soil, meaning that every season has the potential for damaging disease, regardless of weather the previous season.

“Seed treatments offer security against early season threats, but they won’t provide long-term protection,” says Brook. “The seed treatment will help you achieve a good seedling,

but you may still need to apply a foliar fungicide or insecticide if the conditions warrant it.”

Brook cautions that good agronomics are still a crucial component at seeding. “Seeding is risky, and growers are participating in even riskier behaviour by shortening their rotation and seeding really early. Seed treatments are a relatively low-cost insurance. It may not pay every year, but as our disease and insect pressure increases, it will pay more often than not.”



<https://www.cropscience.bayer.us/products/seed-treatment-equipment/on-demand>

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