

Had any surprises lately?

In the last month I have been visiting farms to advise on grain storage and collect weevils for phosphine resistance testing. Too often I find large numbers of insects in the grain which is a surprise to the farmer! The attached photo is of a seal plate removed from the base of a silo – the black stuff is an accumulation of dead insects, dust and moisture and this is not what you want to find just prior to seeding!

The grain sample was alive with insects and needed an immediate fumigation to stop the insects moving off at outloading and finding a safe haven around the farm area until the new grain comes back in November

The oft repeated phrase of 'keep an eye on your investments' comes to mind and this holds true for your investment in next years grain crop.

Even if the grain is in a sealed silo and you have fumigated it, it still needs to be checked regularly and the best way to do this is to lift the lid and check for bad odours. Then extract a small amount of grain from the bottom outlet and put it through a grain screen. You will not see insects on your hand or in the grain until they are around 1000 – 2000 per tonne. Even better a home made pitfall trap in the top of the silo pushed in level with the top of the grain will show up an infestation long before you will see them. (see pic)

Avoid surprises!

To avoid surprises at seeding it's essential to lay the groundwork as this years seed is being extracted. Hygiene is the first line of defence so cleaning up spills around the silos will remove food and harbourage for weevils. Dust on the inside of the silo will keep the dust munchers in board and lodging until next harvest, so wash out or blow out the dust when you've finished seeding. A puff of Dryacide into the silo at the base will ensure any insects that fly in will contact it and die. You can also use Fenitrothion at this early stage on empty silos but be aware of the safety requirements when using it.

The next step is to be sure the sealed silos really are sealed. If you hear them bubbling or can see the oil moving up and down in the pressure relief valve then they are sealed. If not it's a relatively simple task to check the seal rubbers are in good condition, put the seal plates in place and pressure test the silo.

Once the new seed is loaded at harvest then fumigate straight away in a sealed silo with phosphine tablets on a tray in the headspace. If you don't have sealed silos, grade and pickle using a fungicide containing an insecticide.

Further information on grain insect control, sealed storage and pressure testing can be obtained from the local office of DAFWA, a Biosecurity Officer or from the DAFWA website at <http://www.agric.wa.gov.au> click on crops / storage or type 'grain storage' in the search box.

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