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LET'S KEEP IT CLEAN^{1/}

by John Bolinger, Vice-President
Colorado Seed Growers Association
Brush, Colorado

Let's keep it clean! I wish I could get up here and bring to each one of you a new improved sure-fire method of accomplishing a keep-it-clean program, but that I can't do. Most all of you already know and no doubt do all of the things that I am going to talk about. But since it is such an important part of our Program, we can never stress too often the importance of keeping our seed clean.

1. The first thing we do is to get the seed, that we as seed growers, are going to plant. It must be the best seed that is available to us. It should be at least registered and better still foundation, when it is available. If possible, plan your Program far enough ahead so you can see the crop that you are to get your seed from, while it is growing. Be sure you know that the grower whom you get your seed from is doing all of the things that should be done to keep the seed clean, or you may lose the work you put into the crop because someone else failed to do his part. So be sure it is clean when you get it. Next, I think we should be sure our seed is treated for the various diseases. There are a lot of seed-borne diseases-- that we can stop, or at least check, by treating. If in doubt what to use consult your County Agent; if he doesn't have the information you need, he will be able to get it for you.

Quite often we get our seed a few months before we plan to plant it, in which event be sure you have good storage. A few rats and a dirty storage bin can undo all the work and care that has gone into that seed up to the time you get it. This doesn't need to cost much to be effective. We quite often, on small seed lots, use old oil drums with the tops cut out. If stored in a dry place they will keep your seed clean and you won't have bags cut up

^{1/} Thirty-fourth and Thirty-fifth Annual Reports of the International Crop Improvement Association, 1952 and 1953. pp. 121-123.

by mice or rats, --and most important of all--there will be no mixtures of seeds.

Now you have your seed and you know that it is clean. What about the field where it is to be planted? Unless your land is clean you cannot produce clean seed. Only fields that are completely free of noxious weeds and that have very few common weeds, should be used for seed production. There is no place in our Program for weed seed. The preparation of your seed-bed can be a very important step. Have the land in shape for the crop you intend to plant, so that it will germinate right away and be in shape to keep right on growing. Be sure your drill or Planter is in shape to plant the seed in such a manner that it will come up. Be sure, also, that the Planter is clean, that it is not carrying other crop seed or weed seed. There are quite a few methods of cleaning a drill or Planter. No doubt the best way would be to have an air compressor but a water hose will do a good job, or a whisk broom and your pocket-knife to dig the seeds out of cracks and corners.

GET EVERY SEED OUT. BE SURE. For no matter how hard it is to get out, you can bet it will fall out and be planted if you let it stay in the Planter.

In our part of Colorado, it is quite often necessary to irrigate crops to get them up. If you do this, be sure your ditches are clean or you may spread weed seed in this manner. Irrigation water is one of our worst offenders in the spreading of weed seed. Try never to use water when a river is up and the water is muddy. It will carry a lot more weed seed than if your water is coming from a low clear river or from a reservoir. On our land we pump our water and that is best, as you at least do not import any weed seed, and if we keep clean ditches, there won't be any spreading of weeds.

Roguing time is next in line on our Keep-It-Clean Program. This is the time when we can begin to see the fruits of our labor, or the lack of it,

as the case may be. Most all crops should be gone over at least three times. On small grain, get in there in the boot stage; then again when the grain is in full head; with the last coming just before you cut the grain. By doing your roguing at the proper times you will be much better able to see plants that are not true-to-type and get them out. If you find that your field is not up to the standards you have set for your seed, don't try to get by the field inspector. Throw it out yourself, before he ever sees it. If you are doing a bang-up job of producing seed, you will have your field out of certification before he gets to your farm, or you will know that the field is going to pass. On some seed crops, it is necessary to keep a very close check for insects. On alfalfa we, in our area, need to spray two and sometimes three times. The timing of this spraying is very important if we are to get a large yield of high quality seed. With Lygus bug we can lose half or more of our seed crop if we are just a few days late. Be sure you know what to look out for in the crop you are growing. Then check often, so the bugs don't beat you out of your seed crop.

Now comes the time to think about how you are going to harvest your seed. If possible, have your own machines do the work. On seeds that are harvested by the combine method, any good machine in the hands of a good operator can give you clean seed. Go over your machine to see that there are no weed seeds or seed from the previous crop harvested left in it. This, like cleaning a drill, is a job you will need to do well. Again, the compressed air will do the best job but a water hose or whisk broom can also get the job done if you are thorough, but it will take more time than air. If you must hire a machine, make it clear to the operator that he must have it clean before he comes on your farm and be sure he understands what you mean by clean. Every bit of seed and trash out of the inside and off of the outside. We, as growers of clean seed, must bear in mind always, that if there is just

one weed seed in a lot of seed we sell, that is new to the man's farm who buys our seed, we are doing him a real damage and have failed in our Keep-It-Clean Program.

There are quite a number of different seed cleaners we can get for cleaning our seed after harvest. Most all of them will do a good job. I find the most important part of a seed cleaner is the operator. If the man running the cleaner knows his job, he will do a good job with any make of machine and no cleaner can do a good job unless it is set right. The cleaner is another place where we must watch very closely or we may get weed seed or crop mixture in our seed. If you have volume enough, it is best to have and run your own cleaner. In our state, Colorado, we have approved cleaning plants and approved portable cleaners. They are inspected by the Seed Certification Service and are equipped to take care of our seed.

Now, all that is left to do is keep it clean until you get the seed sold. There is usually a considerable period of time between the cleaning of our seed and the selling of it. So it is necessary for a grower to have good storage that is both rat and mouse free. Steel bins are very good for storing most crops. They are easy to clean--are rodent tight--also it is easy to spray them for insects such as weevil.

Seed Growers -- Let's be proud of our Product -- LET'S KEEP IT CLEAN!