

CROPPING

EP graingrowers clean-up

5 Critical Factors

- 1 Investment pays for itself in one year
- 2 Regular testing crucial
- 3 \$20/t price difference
- 4 All barley reapt put through cleaner
- 5 Cleaner 20t/hour

By PAULA THOMPSON

It cost Eyre Peninsula farmer Tony Rodda close to \$20,000 to buy a grain cleaner last year, but the purchase has already paid for itself this season.

Tony and his wife Leanne crop 1300 hectares at Port Neill.

The couple bought a DE Engineers rotary seed cleaner over from Western Australia last January.

The cleaner blows-off lighter material and scalps larger trash and smaller seconds from any sample in one pass.

The grain rolls down a rotating barrel, with higher rotational speeds resulting in more aggressive cleaning.



TOP BUY: Port Neill cropper Tony Rodda says the DE Engineers seed cleaner he bought from Western Australia last year has already paid for itself this season.

Patented 'scalp barrels' remove oversize trash before the grain enters the main cleaning barrels.

Two-barrel machines can process grain at about 20 tonnes/hour taking 12 per cent

wheat screenings down to 2pc.

Tony decided to take the plunge and buy a cleaner after he was unable to secure one locally to hire last year, at the time he needed it to clean grain for seed.

While cleaning during harvest can be very time-consuming, Tony has been able to speed the process by reaping while his wife Leanne keeps an eye on the cleaner.

"The machine cleans faster than we can reap," he said.

The Roddas are now about two-thirds of the way through harvest.

With the odd shower coming through in November and heavy rains in December, the moisture levels in the Roddas' crops have kept right up, making reaping difficult.

"We started harvesting in October but it has all been very stop-start because of the weather," Tony said.

The lack of rain in September led to quality issues that meant most of the grain at their property will be cleaned. Yields are about 1t/ha for both barley and wheat.

"All of the barley we reapt has been cleaned," Tony said. "The barley went up a grade or two, with the majority going to F1."

"Some of the wheat went from AUW1 up to AGP1, which had a \$20 difference."

The Roddas test their grain regularly during reaping, to see whether it is worth cleaning. If the amount of grain taken-out by cleaning is too great, it can be more economical simply to deliver it to the silo.

"We're expecting to clean between 500 to 600t of grain this season," Tony said.

Tony has helped other farmers in the district by lending them the machine.

• Details: 08 9274 2632.



TEAM WORK: Because cleaning can hold-up harvest, Tony's wife Leanne keeps an eye on the cleaner while he is on the header, to get through reaping as quickly as possible.

MyTake

with RON SIMPSON

Agronomist, Bawdens' Rural

Overview:

I would estimate that 50 per cent of grain harvested this season has been cleaned, to get a higher-quality grade and keep screenings out. Until the recent rainfall event, even quantities of barley and wheat had been cleaned. Wheat was being cleaned to get it up to APW rather than feed grades. But the rain has damaged the wheat to the point that it will now all be feed grade.

The good:

Grain cleaning doesn't happen very often at harvest time, just now and again when we don't have any finishing rainfall and end-up with smaller, poorer quality grain. Cleaners are usually used to get the best quality seed for the following season.

The bad:

The biggest problem with grain cleaning is that it is time-consuming. It does put the handbrakes on getting harvest finished.

The ugly:

With cleaning slowing harvest, the biggest danger is running into inclement weather, as happened this year. The longer you leave the crop in the ground, the more you risk running into crop damage, either from the crops getting blown-out or damaged from rainfall events.

My top 5 tips:

1. If you've got an old header with Hannaford screens you can look at converting it into a grain cleaner.
2. By pooling together with other farmers, you can keep down the cost of buying a grain cleaner.
3. If you're on the borderline of feed and malt barley, that variation can mean losing some serious money. If you can make another \$10,000 to \$20,000 out of cleaning grain, it is well worth doing.
4. Once the cleaner is set up, it's advisable to keep an eye on it, so you really need an extra person if you want to keep the header going.
5. While not everyone has a grain cleaner, you can usually find someone in the district who is willing to lend or hire-out one.

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