

Del. soybean growers face poor seed quality

DOVER, Del. — Delaware soybean seed growers normally produce over 100,000 bushels of certified "blue tag" seed each year. This is enough seed to plant well over half the soybean acreage in the state. But this will not be the case in 1978, according to University of

Delaware agronomist Dr. William H. Mitchell. Growers are finding that seed is in short supply and prices are high. There isn't nearly enough locally produced certified seed to meet the demand, and the low quality of on-farm soybeans that might

otherwise be used to meet farmers' needs adds to the problem.

Harvesting delays, caused by heavy rainfall last October and November, are largely responsible for the drop in seed germination this year, explains Mitchell. There were numerous cases last Fall where a two-week delay in harvest made the difference between high quality seed and that which was unsuitable for planting.

In the Harrington area, for example, a field of Kent soybeans ready to harvest on October 25 had a germination rate of 96 per cent. Heavy rains caused a three-week delay in harvesting part of the field, however, and by then germination had dropped to 59 per cent. This experience was repeated on numerous farms, reports the agronomist.

It is impossible to tell by the appearance of seed whether its germination has been reduced by a delay in harvest. This causes a potential problem, since many growers use their own seed and may be taking

comfort in the fact that it looks good. Unfortunately, appearances may be deceptive.

The seed may actually be unsuitable for planting, so there should be no delay in having germination tests made on it. The state Department of Agriculture maintains a seed laboratory in Dover where samples may be tested.

Whereas controlled, laboratory conditions are essential for making precise tests of germination and seedling vigor, a simple do-it-yourself, window-sun test can be of some value in determining the quality of seed, says Mitchell.

A farmer can spread 100 randomly chosen seeds on a double thickness of paper towels. Then he should carefully roll the towels and secure with several rubber bands. Next, one thoroughly soaks the towels and then places the roll in a jar on the window sill. After about one week, the toweling should be opened and the normal sprouts or young seedlings counted.

This is where the experienced eye of the seed analyst comes into play. A farmer may not agree on what is a normal sprout. He should be critical and ask himself, "Will this make a normal, healthy plant, or does it have a broken crook and is it slow to germinate?" He may find it difficult to repeat the test with the same results. The state seed lab will have the same problem, which is why more than one sample is needed for a good test.

If germination tests are low, one should consider applying a fungicide. Many low values are disease-associated and the quality of the seed can be improved dramatically by such treatment. The fungicide can be applied by a seedsmen, or one may want to

consider making a treatment in the seed box of the planter.

Now is the time to evaluate the seed supply, keeping in mind that seed quality rarely improves with time. It is realistic to expect germination values to drop at least slightly, between now and planting time.


A farmer can make some compensation for low germination by increasing the seeding rate. One should remember that seeds that don't germinate are little more than very expensive fertilizer. On the other hand, they could return \$5.30 a bushel at the elevator.

To keep seed and plant heavy, or sell and buy new seed is a judgement each farmer will have to make for himself.

Cumberland County DHIA

(Continued from Page 124)

Ashcombe Dover Dairy						
84	3	12-5	305	16,779	4.0	677
R128	3	6-9	305	19,960	3.0	603
R156	3	6-2	305	20,314	3.5	710
R238	3	3-3	305	17,423	3.9	687
R242	3	3-1	305	19,825	3.3	659
Leroy Showaker & Son						
Podge	3	7-4	305	21,653	3.4	730
Hazel	3	3-6	305	17,619	3.8	669
John F. Stamy III						
61	3	7-3	305	16,625	4.1	679
Robert H. Jamison						
Amy	3	4-8	305	18,566	3.8	702
Mark E. Leinaweaver						
Bess	3	7-3	305	18,843	4.2	787
Pat	3	4-8	305	20,827	3.2	672
Amos F. King						
June	3	5-4	305	19,426	3.4	665
Carl M. Haas						
Bessie	3	5-1	304	20,327	3.3	677
Charm	3	4-5	305	16,898	4.1	699
Hestia	3	6-7	305	18,335	3.8	691
Harold E. Weaver Jr.						
2	3	4-1	305	16,636	4.1	678
10	3	6-1	305	16,409	3.8	629
Douglas S. Cope						
1	3	4-3	305	21,600	3.6	774
Gerkiemer Farms						
71	3	4-1	305	20,726	3.7	758
Nevin Shughart						
Blackie	3	2-11	305	14,774	4.4	647
M. Thomas Sheaffer						
Ormsby	3	9-11	305	21,135	3.7	785
Daisy	3	7-0	305	20,953	4.3	911
Alicia	3	6-11	305	23,650	3.7	872
Ruthann	3	4-0	305	22,826	3.8	878
Melvin E. Stoltzfus						
Tracy	3	5-1	304	19,702	3.4	678



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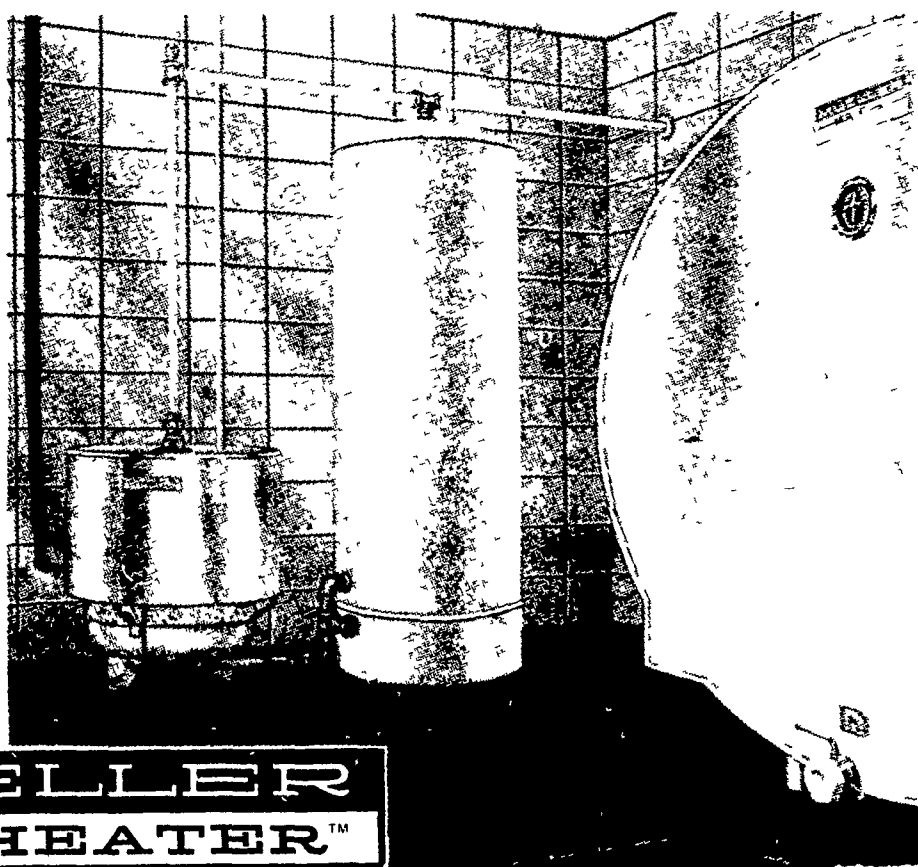
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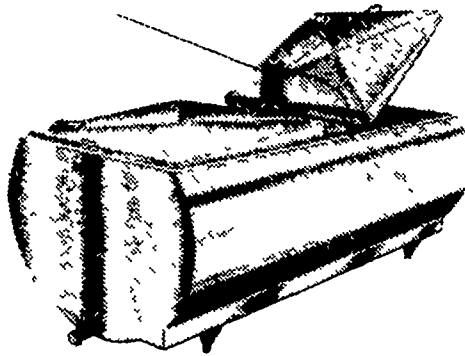
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