

# Treating Tips

**Properly applied seed treatment can protect and increase the value of your seed.**

WITH THE RECENT SPIKE in commodity prices, producers are eager to find ways to maximize crop yields. Many are turning to seed treatments to increase the value of seed. Now, more than ever before, ensuring that seed treatments are applied accurately and with uniformity is critical if added investment is to be realized.

seed.ab.ca went straight to some of the leading treaters in the business to get treating techniques and tips for what makes a good quality seed treatment.

## Proper Product Volume and Seed Coverage

Supplying an accurate chemical dose to the seed requires control of chemical and seed flow rate (both flows must be uniform and stable) and proper ratio of the chemical to seed volume, says Wayne Walker, Manager of Westlock Seed Cleaning Co-op Ltd. The most accurate seed treating applicators employ a positive pressure pumping system and nozzles that can be calibrated for any given seed treatment. These systems ensure proper product volume and seed coverage.

Seed treatment product rate and coverage is important for cost and efficacy. By over applying the product, the cost per treated seed unit will be higher and provide no additional benefits. Conversely, this will affect efficacy and the full benefit of the seed treatment will be lost.

“You have to follow the manufacturers’ recommended label rates,” advises Keith Reynolds, Plant Manager at Strathmore Seed Cleaning Plant Ltd, who adds, “We add 10-15 per cent water to some of the seed treatments to give more volume of product going on the seed. It gives us better coverage.”

## Apply an Accurate, Uniform Dosage to Each Kernel

Accurate and uniform seed dosage provides the best overall plant health, which increases pest control field benefit. For seed coverage, using an applicator tip such as a nozzle of known volume output and pressure is needed. Spreading out the product flow across the seed being treated will allow for maximum coverage and efficacy.

## Faster Speed Isn’t Always Better

As farms get larger speed becomes an issue, but treating quality should not be sacrificed. “The treater we use can



run between 15-24 bushels per minute, but we don’t push the high end of the capacity,” says Reynolds. “If you put too much through you don’t get as much coverage on the seed. We run at about 16-20 bushels per minute.”

Walker says the key is to provide fast and accurate, efficient service. “We can treat seed at 40-45 bushels per minute, which is quite quick so the grower can get in, get treated, and get out.”

## Keep Good Records

Westlock Seed Cleaning Co-op tracks every load and by using scales they know exactly how much product goes on every load. “There is a set amount the grower wants or is willing to pay for, and you have to ensure you match that amount as close as possible,” says Walker. “Everything costs money so you have to be accurate.”

## Secondary Treating is Critical

Both Westlock and Strathmore use a Graham Seed Treating System because it focuses on secondary treating. It sprays



the chemical on instead of using a drip-through auger. “This is the key to a good seed treatment,” says Walker. The seed goes through the treater and, for secondary treating, drops into a mixing chamber that has open ribbon and finger fighting. Walker says this system is, “Better than a straight auger, which is how most growers would accomplish secondary treating on-farm. The open ribbon and finger fighting mixing chamber gives a nice distribution of the chemical over all the seed.”

## Set Yourself Apart

It pays to differentiate your plant by offering a high level of customer service. “We offer a big variety of seed treatments from three different companies and we make the customer aware of any new products and rebate offers out there,” says Walker. julie.mcnabb

## What’s New?

Graham Seed Treating Systems currently has a high-speed seed treater in development called the G40. “It is based on the G3 Platform that has become the most widely used treater in North America,” says Brian Ellis of Graham Seed Treating. “The new G40 will allow large producers, seed cleaners, and seed retailers to treat their seed at speeds up to 40 bushels per minute with accurate application and uniformity.”

## Off-farm Movement

Seed grower Gerald VanRuskenveld has been taking his seed to Westlock Seed Cleaning Co-op Ltd. for about five years. Although he has a seed treater on-farm, VanRuskenveld says it is more convenient to take his seed to the plant. “I used to treat on-farm but it took more people,” he says. “At Westlock they are really fast and are usually done within an hour. Plus, they get a better price on their chemical because they buy bulk. I can’t do it any cheaper at home.”

VanRuskenveld adds that he used to have trouble getting the right rates on-farm but at Westlock they calibrate everything correctly because they do so much volume. “They do a good job. They know exactly how many bushels they’ve treated. If I was doing it out of a bin, I would have to guess.”

It seems more and more growers don’t want to treat seed on-farm. “Anyone with a labour shortage will be going to plants,” says VanRuskenveld. “It’s just too hard to do it yourself. When you have the option to take it somewhere and it’ll be quick and painless, it doesn’t make sense to do it at home.”

[More info on-line at seed.ab.ca](http://seed.ab.ca)

## Before Getting Started...

Wayne Walker, Manager of Westlock Seed Cleaning Co-op Ltd., says there are several things to remember before you even get to treating seed:

- The seed needs to be cleaned thoroughly. That means it is free of all refuse.
- Ensure your equipment is up to speed. Check each piece of equipment regularly to make sure everything is working well.
- Know seed quality such as bushel weight and moisture before application. It is important information because every lot of seed is different so it flows differently.