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## Wheat - Be Alert or Take Your Chances

### Stinking Smut

Wheat growers treat your seed (Stinking Smut), pick your fields carefully (Take-All), or take your chances. In 2005 the incidence of common bunt (stinking smut) continued to be much higher than normally encountered by wheat producers in the central Great Plains. This included Southeast Nebraska with positive cases in Gage, Jefferson and Lancaster Counties. Seed saved for fall planting should be cleaned examined closely for Common Bunt and fully treated if none is found to prevent Common Bunt. If any is found discard the seed and purchase certified seed. Purchased certified seed should be ordered fully treated.

The best defense against common bunt is to plant treated certified seed. The economic risk of having bunt in the harvested grain is enormous. In most instances the elevator will reject the wheat which leaves the grower with few alternatives. The bunted wheat could be used in ethanol production if the plant will accept it. Feeding it to livestock usually is not feasible particularly if the level of bunt is high. The strong rotten fish odor makes the grain unpalatable to swine and cattle and certainly not something acceptable in your bread.

The preferred methods of treating seed are to either use a commercial seed treater that fits onto the auger and applies the chemical as the wheat moves through it, buy treated seed or have a seed conditioner treat it after purchase. These methods ensure more uniform coverage of the seed which is important in eliminating the smut spores on the outside of the seed coat. When treating seed in the drill box, it is critical that the seeds be uniformly covered. Definitely avoid having some seeds heavily covered and others lightly or poorly covered. With some products, applying too much fungicide can restrict germination.

Some wheat seed treatments that can be used to prevent common bunt, stinking smut and seedling blight are Vitavax 34, Vitavax-PCNB, Vitavax Extra, Vitavax 200, Dividend XL, Raxil MD & XT, Raxil MD Extra, Raxil-Thiram, Prevail.

### Take-All

Take-All Disease is named for the result of the disease. It takes all the yield. Take-All disease is quite common. Most wheat growers have noticed small patches of wheat turn white and die right after heading. These are usually near the edge of the field along the roadside brome grass or the grassed waterway. The disease is harbored in the brome or native grass and infects the wheat planted on or next to the grass plants. Can it kill an entire field? Yes it can. Farmers converting pasture or grass land or old brome infested alfalfa fields to cropland often chose wheat as the first crop. DANGER! DANGER! Grass fields should not be planted to wheat for two years to avoid the risk of Take-All. Several farmers learned this the hard way again this year.

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