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PREPARE EQUIPMENT AND BINS

Grain harvested is essentially insect free but can become infested by storage insects. These insects come from contaminated equipment such as combines, grain augers and grain bins that were not thoroughly cleaned and treated.

Here are some tips to clean and prepare bins and equipment before this year's harvest.

* All harvesting equipment should be cleaned. Stored insects can invade new grain from infesting harvesting and handling equipment. Carefully remove all traces of old grain from combines, truck beds, grain carts, augers and other equipment used for harvesting. This should have been done last fall but if not, it's a must to do it now. Your best tool is the shop vac to get the job done right. Some experts say sanitation is 80 percent of an effective program to eliminate stored grain pests.

* Clean bins completely and never store new on old grain. Remove all grain including any stuck on the walls.

* The inside walls and floors should be treated with a residual insecticide after thorough cleaning. The outside walls (up to 15 feet) and outside base of grain storage bins may also be treated. The area beneath the perforated, drying floor should also be cleaned and treated with a residual insecticide.

This has become harder as pesticide labels have changed. In the old world we could use phostoxin pellets but labels have changed and transporting it has changed that has essentially turned grain fumigant applications as commercial only. Insecticides that are labeled for empty bins include Tempo (beta-cyfluthrin), Storcide II (deltamethrin and chlormethylfos), Suspend (deltamethrin) and the old standby Malathion. Storcide II is labeled for automated spray equipment or directed spray from the outside in. It is very important to read and follow the label instructions for bin applications for applicator safety and proper applications.

* Remove any spilled grain from around the outside of the bin and storage facility. Carefully inspect storage bins, and seal/caulk any cracks, holes or gaps that could be potential entry points for insects or rodents. Look for possible moisture leaks in the roof and repair if necessary.

* Remove any vegetation from within 10 feet of storage bins to discourage rodents and insects from establishing. Gravel is not cheap but a 4 foot wide strip of bare gravel around the perimeter of a bin is very desirable.

* Rodent proof your bins by plugging holes, sealing bins, caulking and making general repairs. If rats have tunneled under the bin foundation, use baits and/or traps to catch and eliminate them.

* So often wiring is overlooked. Inspect wiring for fans and other electrical components in the bins for corrosion and cracked, frayed or broken insulation. Wiring should be in waterproof, dust-tight conduit to prevent problems. Conduit should not be kinked and make sure all connections are secure.

* Check your fans, heaters, transitions and ducts for corrosion and other damage. Remove any accumulated dust and dirt that may reduce operating efficiency. Mice can sometimes nest in control boxes and they can do a lot of damage.



Use an integrated approach and remember a good shop vac can eliminate 80 percent of the problems with insects.

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