



NEBRASKA SEED FOCUS

A Publication of the Nebraska Crop Improvement Association



FUSARIUM HEAD BLIGHT (FHB) ALERT: SCOUTING, SEED TREATMENT, AND TESTING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CERTIFIED WHEAT SEED

As Nebraska wheat enters the critical flowering stage, certified seed producers are urged to monitor closely for Fusarium head blight (FHB), or scab. Recent rains and lingering cereal residue have created ideal conditions for infection, which can reduce germination, seed vigor, and test weight, ultimately jeopardizing seed certification. Dr. Stephen Wegulo, UNL Plant Pathologist, emphasizes that early scouting and timely fungicide applications with products containing metconazole, prothioconazole, or tebuconazole are crucial to minimize FHB impact.

If scab is present in your seed lot, growers have effective options to improve seed quality and stand establishment. Aggressive cleaning can help remove lightweight, scabby kernels, improving overall lot quality. Additionally, seed treatment with fungicides has proven to significantly boost germination rates, even raising some lots from 60% to over 90%—by protecting viable seeds from fungal damage. Combining thorough cleaning with seed treatment offers the best chance for strong, healthy seedlings.

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DATES and EVENTS

July 1
*Field Applications - Millet, Soybeans,
Chickpeas*

July 4
Holiday - Office Closed

August 1
*Sales Disposition - Spring Small Grains,
Peas, Millet, Soybeans*

August 11
NCIA Board Meeting

September 1
Sales Disposition - Chickpeas

September 1
Holiday - Office Closed

November 27-18
Holiday - Office Closed

December 5
NCIA Board Meeting

December 4-January 2
NCIA and UNL Closed

BEFORE THE INSPECTOR ARRIVES:

Preparing Your Certified Small Grain Fields

Isolation & Borders

Make sure your certified small grain fields have a 10-foot isolation strip from other varieties of the same crop before pollination begins. If not, 10 feet must be removed from each seed field at harvest. Markers like flags or posts help inspectors identify boundaries but do not replace the required physical isolation. Lack of proper isolation may lead to reinspection.

Remove Other Crops & Off-types

Take effective steps to control contaminating crops and other seed varieties. Rogue out any other crops or other varieties of the crop being inspected, especially those whose seeds cannot be separated during cleaning, such as rye in wheat.

Weed Control

Noxious weeds in the field increase the likelihood their seeds will be found in the cleaned seed lot. Cleaned seed lots containing Primary or Prohibited noxious weed seeds (e.g., Canadian thistle, musk thistle) will be rejected. Restricted noxious weeds like pennycress and mustard must also be controlled to meet certification standards.

Manage Field Health

Address any diseases, insect damage, nutrient deficiencies, or uneven growth that could affect seed quality.

Field Changes & Cancellations

Only applicants — not contract growers — may cancel or add fields by contacting the NCIA office before the field inspector arrives. Late applications are subject to additional fees and inspector availability.

NCIA inspectors check random areas throughout your field to evaluate compliance with Nebraska Seed Certification Standards. This inspection provides a solid overall picture but may not catch every issue. That's why it's important to manage your fields carefully before inspection—problems found during inspection are likely present elsewhere in the field as well.

SCAB (CONTINUED)

Following harvest, NCIA encourages producers to submit wheat samples promptly for preliminary germination testing. Upon request, NCIA lab will perform treated germination tests paired with untreated testing, saving time on follow-up testing. Note that seed treated by NCIA for preliminary testing cannot be used for labeling or sale. If seed treatment is required to meet certification standards, lots must be conditioned and treated before submitting the final samples for official testing.

To protect seed quality, maintain lot identity during harvest and storage, and clean all equipment between lots. Early scouting, effective fungicide use, and proper seed handling are key to producing a marketable, certifiable wheat crop despite increasing FHB risks.

CARRYOVER AND NEW CROP SEED TESTING REMINDER

Now is the perfect time to test your carryover seed! Remember, all carryover seed must be retested before any sales this fall. Some growers overlook this step and end up with seed that's ineligible for sale during the short certification season. To avoid delays, be sure to send in a sample of any carryover seed to update its germination status.

When submitting samples, please include the field name and lot number—this helps us process your tests as quickly as possible. For newly harvested small grains, keep in mind that dormancy requires an extra 5 days before testing can begin, so new crop samples typically take about 14 days to complete.

Make sure to clearly label your samples with the NCIA field name and the tests needed. Missing information can cause delays in processing. If you need seed sample bags, just call the NCIA office—we'll be happy to send them out to you free of charge.

When sending seed samples via postal service, please note that NCIA only receives mail through UNL on odd-numbered days of the week. However, UPS and FedEx deliver to NCIA every day.

HANDLING CERTIFIED SEED IN BULK AND BAGGED SALES

When selling certified seed in bulk—meaning loose seed in storage or shipping vehicles rather than bags—sellers must follow specific regulations to ensure quality and traceability. Certified seed in bulk may be sold only to consumers or other certification members (excluding Associate members) for resale purposes, with a strict limit of two physical movements of the seed allowed. Each bulk sale must be accompanied by an official Nebraska Bulk Sales Certificate, which can be generated and printed from the NCIA website. At the time of purchase, buyers must receive a copy of this certificate.

For seed sold in bags, all certified seed must be packaged in new, sealed bags that prevent tampering, with an official certification label securely affixed to each bag. Bulk bags require sealing with an NCIA bulk tie, which helps guarantee the seed has not been compromised. Reusable bulk boxes may also be used if properly cleaned and sealed with NCIA bulk ties and must be labeled just like bagged seed. Bulk ties can be purchased from the NCIA office for \$0.50 each plus shipping.

Proper labeling is critical for maintaining seed certification status. All certified seed sold in bags or sealable containers must carry official certification labels that meet national standards and clearly display the certifying agency, variety, kind, seed class, and lot number. These labels can only be printed after seed samples meet certification standards and must be affixed in a way that makes tampering obvious. Following these procedures ensures that Nebraska Certified Seed maintains its quality and trustworthiness from seller to buyer.

2026 SEED IMPROVEMENT CONFERENCE

The 33rd annual Nebraska Seed Improvement Conference will bring together the memberships of the Nebraska Crop Improvement Association and the Nebraska Seed Trade Association. It will be held January 12-13, 2026, at Embassy Suites, LaVista, Nebraska.

SEED CERTIFICATION IN NEBRASKA: A BRIEF LOOK

Seed certification has been part of Nebraska agriculture for over a century. The Nebraska Crop Improvement Association was founded in 1902 and became the state's official seed certifying agency in 1931. Today, as in the beginning, the goal remains the same: to provide a system that supports the production and use of high-quality, accurately identified seed.

NCIA is a non-profit, membership-based organization designated by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources as the official seed certification agency for the state of Nebraska. This designation is authorized under Nebraska statutes (§§81-2,149 to 81-2,154).

Seed certification is based on the verification of varietal identity and the assessment of genetic purity through evaluation of phenotypic traits. Certification indicates that a seed lot has met defined standards through documented pedigree, field inspections, and laboratory analyses for germination and mechanical purity. It does not guarantee crop performance or market value but confirms compliance with established certification requirements.

Certified seed remains an important part of Nebraska's seed industry. NCIA will continue to support that system by working with members, seed developers, and others committed to seed quality.

NCIA Mission: To support and promote the production and use of high-quality seed through certification and quality assurance services, education, and collaboration with the agricultural community.

NCIA Vision: To be a trusted resource for improving and assuring seed quality.