



Bulk up canola seed for more accurate seeding rates

Using seed bulking agents for more accurate seeding is not a new concept. Growers who used Counter 5G or Furadan granular for flea beetle control knew that additional material in the seed box helped with more accurate seeding rates. Now, the Canola Council of Canada has demonstrated that other seed bulking materials can do the same thing.

During two years of trials, the Canola Production Centre (CPC) tests looked into what combination of seeding rates and seed bulking agents would give the best contribution margin. In some cases, they found that seeding rates could be shaved to three pounds per acre if a seed bulking agent was used.

"Despite the research, I wouldn't necessarily recommend the practice of cutting back seeding rates, even with a seed bulking agent," says John Mayko, agronomic research and extension manager with the Canola Council. "There are some risks including delayed maturity and poor plant stands under poor seedbed conditions."

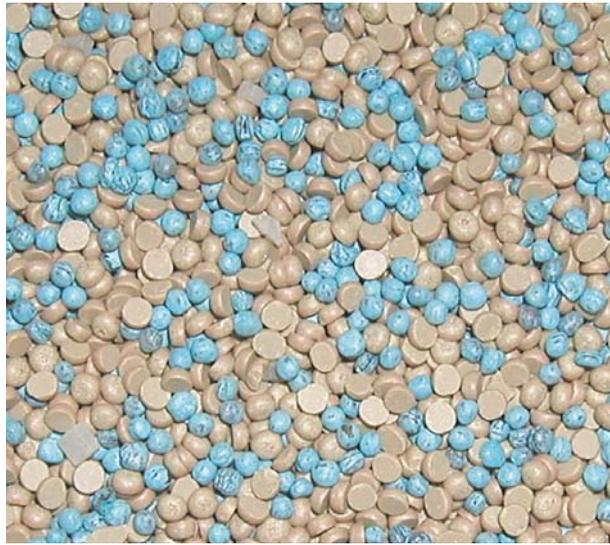
Rather, Mayko says a seed bulking agent can be used to deliver more accurate seeding which should result in more uniform plant stands – and hopefully – better yields.

Two years of trials show possibilities

In 2002, the CPC trials used AccuSeed, a granular elemental sulphur as a seed bulking agent. Seeding rates of three

and five pounds per acre, with and without AccuSeed, were used with yield and net contribution margin measured (see Table 1).

The yield difference was not significant between the three pounds per acre with AccuSeed and the five pounds per acre without AccuSeed.



Blended canola and AccuSeed.

Does that mean you should phone up your seed retailer and cut back your seed order by two pounds per acre?

"We promote regular seeding rates when using AccuSeed," says Jeff Ivan, Canadian account manager with Tiger Industries of Calgary, AccuSeed's manufacturer. "There is a risk if you cut back canola rates too far and optimum plant populations are not established."

If canola rates are cut and rainfall is short, both Ivan and Mayko say that the canola canopy may not close quickly

and weed competition and yield potential could suffer. This was seen at the Nipawin site where rainfall was short in 2002 and yields were lower with the lower seeding rates.

Rather, Ivan says farmers are starting to use AccuSeed with regular canola seeding rates. He cites the example of a farm supply retailer near Edmonton that has many of its customers using AccuSeed. The reason they use AccuSeed is to prevent overseeding with heavy rates due to inaccurate drill calibration. At \$5 to \$6 for hybrid canola seed, just saving one pound per acre can pay for AccuSeed. As well, AccuSeed contains 90 percent sulphur which can be factored into a long-term fertility plan.

The suggested retail price of AccuSeed is generally in the \$0.50 per pound range. At a recommended bulking rate of 10 to 15 pounds per acre, the cost ranges from a low of \$5 per acre to a high of \$7.50 per acre.

"I've heard of examples where a farmer seeds 400 acres of canola and is down to an ice cream pail of seed left over when using AccuSeed," says Ivan.

An exception to using regular seeding rates is cutting back rates from eight pounds of canola seed per acre down to five or six. "You would likely be okay cutting rates back under those circumstances," says Ivan.

AccuSeed is available in 25kg bags, 1000kg mini-bulk bags or bulk. ■

Table 1. Yield and net contribution.

	Dauphin, Manitoba		Nipawin, Saskatchewan		Lethbridge, Alberta (irrigated)	
	NYD	CMD	NYD	CMD	NYD	CMD
Seed rate @ 3lb/ac + AccuSeed 10lb/ac	34.7	181	18.1	32	52.1	331
Seed rate @ 5lb/ac (check)	35.0	177	20.4	55	51.6	320

Note: NYD = net yield data (check). CMD = contribution margin data (\$/ac).