

DRILL BOX SURVEY

Utah growers have long been encouraged to plant certified seed. The certification process is accomplished by accurate record keeping and a series of inspections conducted in the field, seed conditioning facility, and seed testing laboratory. Seed certification is a service provided by the Utah Crop Improvement Association in cooperation with the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station and the Division of Plant Industry, Utah Department of Agriculture and Food. Only seed produced in accordance with the standards and regulations of the Utah Crop Improvement Association, and labeled with an official tag can be represented as certified seed.

It has been ten years since the last Utah Small Grain Drill Box Survey was completed. Purpose of this survey is/has been to document the kind and quality of seed that is actually being planted in Utah fields. Efforts are currently underway to add another decade of data to this survey. This will require the efforts of every Agricultural Extension Agent in the State, along with the cooperation of Utah growers who are raising small grains. Cache County will provide 42 samples from spring plantings and 46 additional samples during fall planting. We believe all farmers will benefit from the collected data.

The importance of planting high quality seed has long been a major programmatic theme for USU Extension and Utah Crop Improvement Association. The first survey was completed in 1958 and repeated in 1968, 1978, 1988, and 2001. The drill box survey is unique in that it provides specific impact documentation for a long-term, statewide educational program that spans five decades.

The following protocol is required when collecting grain for the 2011 spring drill box survey. A similar procedure will be used later for the fall survey.

1. Samples of grain seed are to be collected from growers at planting time. Ideally, the sample should be taken from a drill box in the field. However, it is acceptable to collect a sample from seed bags that are ready for planting, or even out of a truck bed or storage bin so long as the seed is ready for planting at the time of sampling. In all cases, sampling should entail an actual visit to the farm.
2. It is generally recommended that only 1 sample be collected per farm. However, it may be necessary in some cases, such as when an individual farmer may plant more than 300 acres, to collect more than one sample from a single grower. If this is done, agents are to take samples from different seed lots being planted on different fields.
3. Agents are to include grain from the top, middle, and bottom portions of each drill box. Otherwise, many small weed seeds that tend to settle to the bottom, or large seeds (like wild oats) that often "float" to the top may not be detected.
4. At least 1 pound of grain is needed to conduct a valid purity analysis.
5. Agents are required to fill out a survey card for each sample and to answer all questions, even if the answer is "unknown". The seed tag (if available) is also placed inside the envelope.

We thank growers in advance for their help in completing this survey. Representatives from USU Extension and Utah Crop Improvement Association will be contacting farmers periodically during the planting season to obtain samples, answer any questions and to help in any other way we can. If a grower would like a copy of their sample results, we will attempt to be accommodating. It will take several months, however, to collect samples from every county, conduct the analysis and compile all data.