

## LATE SUMMER CROP CONSIDERATIONS

Cache County enjoyed a “near-perfect” spring for the production of small grains. Cooler weather and timely rains provided almost ideal conditions for wheat, barley, oats and safflower. Most local farmers are looking at one of the best grain crops in years. Our most recent challenge has been to keep crops properly irrigated with hot July days. We will soon be busy with the harvest and sale of grains.

During the past year, I have participated in several discussions regarding the accuracy of grain inspection and marketing. It is not uncommon for growers to question the accuracy of protein, moisture and grade tests, especially since grain has become so valuable and a slight difference in test results can make a significant difference in settlement. Most growers are of the opinion that all instruments used at elevators to determine grain quality and quantity are routinely tested and calibrated by state compliance officers. That is not necessarily true. Scales are certified on a regular basis, but instruments used for such things as protein and moisture testing may or may not be accurate.

There was a lively discussion at the State Farm Bureau Convention last November regarding the wisdom of mandatory calibration and on-going testing of instruments used at grain elevators. Advocates were not accusing grain buyers of intentional dishonesty, but they were arguing that instruments may be faulty and one would never know unless compliance officers certified instruments and procedures on a regular basis. Other delegates contended that we did not have enough compliance officers to monitor every grain elevator in the state, and that a suitable option already existed through the Official Grain Inspection and Weighing facility in Ogden.

As a result we invited George Wilson, Utah State Grain Inspection Service, to speak at our February Cache Crops School about official grain inspection and marketing. Mr. Wilson explained that the Utah Grain Inspection facility is an independent third party, certified by The Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS). Trained technicians serve producers, handlers, processors, exporters, importers, and end-users of American grain by providing consistent, accurate, and professional grain inspection and weighing services. Standardized procedures and proven protocols used by the FGIS assure absolute accuracy of grain tests. Using finely calibrated master instruments and official reference methods, FGIS certified technicians use equipment and procedures that are repeatedly verified for accuracy.

When it is time to harvest the grain it is impossible for growers to run to Ogden with a sample and wait for results before delivering the product to the purchasing elevator. Wilson recommended that growers simply tell their buyers that settlement can be made after FGIS tests are run and results are returned to both parties. That way, both parties can have total confidence that the results are correct and that settlement will be fair. The cost of \$12 per submitted sample is minor when one considers the potential dollar difference from a faulty test.

The reader should not assume that this article implies intentional dishonesty on the part of grain elevator managers. Instruments can easily lose calibration, however, especially in the rush at harvest time. Our purpose is to simply remind growers of a service that is readily available and that is known worldwide for consistency, accuracy, responsiveness, credibility and professional integrity. Growers desiring additional information may call the FGIS lab and speak with Mr. Wilson at 801-392-2292.