



## WHY SO IMPORTANT TO GET DEFOLIATION RIGHT?

HOW NOT GETTING DEFOLIATION RIGHT HAS FLOW ON EFFECTS RIGHT DOWN THE LINE, FROM INCREASING COSTS AND REDUCING PROFITS TO GROWERS AND POOR FIBRE QUALITY WHICH AFFECTS AUSTRALIA'S REPUTATION AS PRODUCING SOME OF THE WORLD'S BEST COTTON.

*Spotlight's* Melanie Jenson caught up with ACSA Board Member Phil Sloan and Namoi Cotton's Northern Regions Operations Manager Andrew Vanderstok at the recent Field to Fabric Roadshow in Moree to talk about what they saw as important issues as harvest arrives.

"Defoliation and moisture" was the almost in-unison reply from both men. In this article we look in particular at defoliation. (See article on moisture management Page 9.)

The results – or problems - caused by poor defoliation are felt right along the production chain once the cotton leaves the farm, but are first encountered by ginner. Poor defoliation means more trash in the lint, and that equals more intense ginning, but they can only remove so much.

"Defoliation, if done correctly means low trash if done incorrectly means higher trash content; therefore growers should follow guidelines for best practice defoliation," Andrew said.

"There are other factors which may increase trash content, such as pickers not set up or working correctly and picking when moisture is too high, as this affects the efficiency of the machine to cleanly take the cotton from the bush."

High trash content does not only offer a contamination issue, it has fibre quality implications as well.

"High trash content in seeded cotton delivered to the cotton gin will require more cleaning equipment and possibly the attention of more heat from the burners to reduce the amount of trash contained in the bale sample.

"An increase use of ginning equipment will result in a higher count of neps that can be found within the fibre.

"Higher volumes of trash will reduce the turn out percentage from the module and give less return to the grower; also this adversely has an impact on the gin through put and higher running cost."

Contamination and neps are the main concern in Australian cotton, according to our customers, the mills and spinners. Neps affect the appearance of cotton yarns and fabric and are usually associated with lower yarn strength, poorer spinning performance and a more irregular yarn. There are no cost effective means of covering or removing them once they are present in fabric. They appear as spots or 'flecks' on finished fabrics and this downgrades the fabric or it is rejected.

Merchants feel the effect of contaminated cotton in any way, but this effect can be lessened and it starts with good defoliation practices.

"Our customers want zero contamination," Australian Cotton Shippers Association board member Phil Sloan said.

"They want contamination free and low neps.

"The place to start to addressing contamination issues is defoliation because poor defoliation has such a knock-on effect on the quality and profitability of the harvest, which is felt strongly down the value chain.

"The bottom line is if it's easier to pick, it's easier to gin and easier to market.

"Dry weather at defoliation and harvest is the key to a good defoliation and pick."

#### MAJOR POINTS AT HARVEST

- Best Practice defoliation, picking and module building.
- Don't pick too early.
- Moisture levels to be monitored
- Staging of Round Modules in picking order Contamination.
- Notification to ginning companies of any known abnormalities.
- Grower participation.
- Industry Standards

(Courtesy Andrew Vanderstok Namoi Cotton)



Namoi Cotton's Northern Regions Operations Manager Andrew Vanderstok and ACSA Board Member Phil Sloan and at the recent Field to Fabric Roadshow in Moree, which gave valuable information about cause and effect in relation to management and the final product.