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This issue of CQ Cotton Update focuses on picking and some issues that can arise.

Quality Issues

There are a number of quality and safety issues that arise during picking. These are often repeated every season, however are incredibly important.

At the CHCG&IA and DVCGA dryland grower workshops, Rick Jones, from Queensland Cotton, spoke from a ginner's perspective on how growers can ensure that cotton reaches the gin in the best condition possible.

Moisture at Ginning

Moisture at picking has a significant impact on fibre quality.

- If moisture is present on vehicles, it is most likely too wet to pick.
- If you can feel moisture on the cotton it is too wet.
- Seed cotton measured on a moisture meter should be less than 12% - keeping in mind that machine picking can add 2% moisture and green leaf will also add moisture.
- The seed should feel hard (it will crack in your teeth).

Tip: a handful of cotton squeezed in the palm of your hand will spring back to near its original size if the moisture is acceptable for picking.

Contamination

Contamination mostly happens at picking and module building through natural contaminants such as rocks, leaf and grass or man-made contaminants such as torn cotton tarps and plastic wrap.

What can you do if you have high moisture or potential contaminants?

- Notify your ginner of high moisture – they may be able to gin these modules first.
- Notify your ginner of potential contaminants as they will try to minimise the contamination and or notify merchant of potential contamination.

If you have planted late in the window and will be picking later in the season, keep in touch with the gin to ensure there are no issues with cotton being ginned.

Remember to Come Clean Go Clean!

To ensure the prevention of diseases and pests appearing and spreading in Central Queensland, please ensure that you practice Come Clean Go Clean.

Practicing good farm hygiene helps prevent weeds, diseases and pests from coming in to Central Queensland but also prevent the spread of existing weeds, disease and pests around the region and into neighbouring regions.

Farm to Farm Movement of Equipment

Good farm biosecurity should be maintained:

- Equipment wash down:
 - Equipment and machinery should be cleaned down to remove all soil and plant material with FarmCleanse or a similar product used.
- Personal hygiene:
 - Pests, weed seeds and diseases can be carried by people on clothing and footwear. Growers and consultants should consider this when visiting other farms.
 - Enter clean fields first; with diseased or infested fields last.
 - When moving from diseased or infested fields, ensure you clean footwear with FarmCleanse.
- Growers need to ensure that good communication with contractors is maintained and reinforce your Come Clean Go Clean requirements. Growers should ensure they provide an area for contractors to wash down.

Movement of Equipment within a Farm

It is grower discretion as to how they reduce the spread of pests, diseases and weeds within their own farms. If infestation is restricted to a couple of fields growers can consider preventing further spread by picking diseased or infested fields last or washing down equipment and machinery before entering a non-diseased field.

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