

Oilseed rape drilling stewardship: checklist



Seed treatments are an essential crop management tool for modern farming and we need to ensure that we keep them. They are so simple to use that it is all too easy to forget that they are pesticides and that sowing seeds needs the same careful approach as spraying pesticides. This short leaflet is designed to remind oilseed growers of the main points to consider when sowing oilseed rape*.

- On farm the main risks come from:**
- Accidental seed spills
 - Seed not covered by soil during sowing
 - Dust abraded from seed

When handling seed use appropriate PPE. Take special care near footpaths and areas of public access.

With rape the small seeds pose special problems compared to cereals and maize.

Avoid dust:

- Ensure seed is treated with appropriate equipment, such as Bayer-approved batch seed treaters. These ensure that seed treatments are applied accurately with uniform loading on each seed and allow improved quality assurance checks and record keeping
- Handle bags with care to avoid abrasion of the treatment from the seed
- Do not tip dust into drill – there should be minimal dust if treatments have been applied correctly to rape seed
- Do not drill too fast for the prevailing conditions

Small seed are easily spilt. Any size of spill is important – deal with it immediately

To avoid spills:

- Ensure drilling equipment is properly maintained and will not allow seed to leak
- Take time and care when loading seed hopper
- Always fill the drill where any spills can be caught or buried safely (never fill over grass or other vegetation where spills cannot be cleared)
- Ensure no seed is released when seed and equipment is in transit
- Do not allow seed to be spilt during calibration or operating checks

Always carry a spill kit which should comprise:

- Spade to cover or retrieve spilt seed
- Spare bag including label to save seed recovered
- Canvas sheet for use when calibrating the drill

Ensure all seed is covered and not exposed for birds and wildlife to eat:

- Treated seed must always be sown using a drill or techniques that place the seed in or on the soil and ensure that it is covered – **never use wide broadcast or autocast methods**
- Set up and check equipment on an area yet to be sown
- Check seedbed is of appropriate quality for drilling technique being used
- Ensure drill is moving forward before lowering coulters into ground
- Take care when lifting drill in and out of work – ideally shut off seed mechanism a metre before row ends

After drilling:

- Remove all seed from drill, ensuring seed and dust is collected into labelled bags for safe disposal. Never burn treated seed
- Collect all empty sacks before leaving field
- Never re-use empty bags that have contained treated seed for any purpose other than storing original treated seed
- Store left-over seed in original bags with labels in a secure store for re-use or safe disposal
- Ensure dry, safe storage of seed that prevents access by pets, livestock, birds and small mammals
- Wash hands immediately after use and before eating and drinking
- Make record of operations, settings and whether any problems encountered

* More details appropriate for oilseed rape and for other crops can be found in our guide to safe and effective use of seed treatments which you can obtain at www.bayercropscience.co.uk/safeseed

