

SEED CROP NOTES

AUGUST 1988

FIELD INSPECTION FOR CERTIFIED ALFALFA SEED

The California Crop Improvement Association inspected alfalfa and clover seed fields in Fresno County in early July. Reports from the inspectors have been favorable, but growers should be aware that it is their responsibility to submit an application for certification or renewal by the deadline. There were several calls late in the inspection period from growers who were not on the inspector's list.

This year, there was only one change in the guidelines for producing certified alfalfa seed. As of this year, replanting to thicken a stand or to fill in skips is permitted in row plantings. Replanted areas must be noted on the renewal application and a Foundation seed tag from the planting stock must accompany the renewal application.

26,600 acres of alfalfa seed were submitted for certification in Fresno County this year. The harvested acreage of certified seed for last year was 35,000 acres with yields averaging 620 lbs./acre. Non-certified alfalfa seed was harvested on 14,000 acres with an average production of 580 lbs./acre. (Source: Fresno County Department of Agriculture, 1987 Agricultural Crop and Livestock Report.).

PREPARATION FOR HARVEST

As most of you are aware, weed oil is no longer registered for use in California as a desiccant for seed alfalfa. However, there are management practices which can reduce the cost of desiccation and improve the success of the desiccants available for use in California seed production.

Under our typical summer conditions, it generally takes 20 to 28 days to develop mature seed after pollination, and about 14 days from the time the green pods show. This means that prior to September 15 - October 1, defoliation should be delayed as long as there are appreciable blossoms and green pods in the field. After these dates it is advisable to go ahead and spray cure so that harvest can be completed before rains begin. In late fields some green pods are usually sacrificed in order to complete harvest while the chance of rain is low.