

## INSECT CONTROL

Adult lygus can feed on immature alfalfa seed and destroy the seed's ability to germinate. The late season lygus populations often build up in the green spots of a seed field. It may pay to spot treat for lygus if the seed is not mature in these areas. Once the bees are removed (3-4 weeks prior to harvest), less expensive and more effective pesticides can often be used. Mite control is not recommended after pollination is complete if you have enough moisture in the plants to allow the seed to mature in spite of mite feeding, which causes plants to dry more quickly. Chalcid control is achieved primarily through post-harvest sanitation. Larvae are present within the seed pod and are not affected by spray treatments.

## DESICCATION

There are two methods commonly used for curing alfalfa seed. Windrow curing is most often used when the field is late or when there are a lot of weeds. The advantage to windrow curing is that it allows a good percentage of the green seed to mature while it is in the windrow. To avoid shattering, windrowing should be done during periods of high humidity or when dew is present on the plants (before the seed pods open).

The second method is pre-harvest desiccation - spraying or curing of the seed crop with a chemical desiccant. This is done to dry the foliage to make direct combining possible. Spray curing avoids seed loss due to cutting and windrowing and reduces loss caused by wind damage. Use of desiccants also allows growers to influence their own harvest dates since harvest can be delayed until nearly all of the pods are ripe. Once the field is cured sufficiently, combining must not be delayed or extensive losses may result from shattering.

Spray curing works best if soil moisture is low, which minimizes new growth from the crowns. Regrowth from the crowns following desiccation occurs more rapidly in fields where there is available moisture in the soil due to late irrigation, high water tables, or soils with high moisture holding capacity.

Success of field desiccation will depend on the temperature, water table condition, and the density of the foliage. On warm days in open stands, where there is no water table problem, field drying and perhaps one application of a desiccant will suffice. On cool days later in the season, and on dense and matted fields, more than one application will be required to effectively cure the field.