



## Harvesting lupins

*Bruce Walker, Rutherglen*

*Lupins are now established as a cash crop and soil improver.*

In years when moisture is not limiting, very heavy crops can be anticipated. Green matter just before harvest can reach 12 tonnes per hectare. To avoid seed loss and damage, certain strategies are needed.

Open-front headers are necessary when crops are dense but closed-front machines cope adequately with light crops.

Ground speed is governed by crop density and is generally slower than for cereals.

The wider the drum setting, the more material can pass through. Since lupin pods split readily on impact, it is important that the concave should be closed just enough to make sure of separation.

Lupin grain is relatively large and heavy so air flow can be high and will not blow grain over the tailboard. To ensure maximum blast, use a bottom riddle with a large punched-hole. Keep repeats to a minimum. Damaged grain will not germinate.

Although the seed has a tough skin and is not easily damaged, the germ is very sensitive to impact. Seed that is over-threshed will have a marked reduction in germination. When harvesting lupins for seed, the drum speed must not exceed 500 rpm. When harvesting for stockfeed, drum speeds up to 1200 rpm are suitable.

Timing is important. The crop is ready to harvest when the pod is dry and splits when squeezed. In some seasons this will occur when the stems are still quite green.

Although lupins will not shed if left standing, avoid reduced germination by harvesting as soon as possible after maturity.

If the crop is very dry, severe pod losses can occur during harvesting. To reduce these losses to a minimum, harvest either at night or early morning.

Harvested grain which is to be kept for seed should be tested for germination percentage. In Victoria, a statement of the purity and germination percentage is required under the Seeds Act 1982 for grain to be sold as seed. Damaged lines with low germination would be difficult to sell as seed in normal conditions. A seed test can be conducted at the Academy of Grain Technology, Werribee. A sample of 1kg of seed should be sent for testing.

Although not compulsory, an additional test for cucumber mosaic virus (CMV) would be desirable. A CMV testing service is available from the South Australian Research and Development Institute.

If you have further enquires on any aspects of lupin harvesting ask your local field crops extension officer or the Rutherglen Research Institute.

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