

KARNAL BUNT TESTING INFORMATION

UDAF PLANS STATEWIDE WHEAT TESTING

The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture agreed to begin statewide testing of wheat to ensure Utah remains free from Karnal bunt fungus. The testing is part of a \$3-million nationwide effort to identify and eradicate the fungus. Karnal bunt is not a known health threat to humans.

Many foreign countries are banning the importation of American wheat unless shipments can be verified that they are from areas certified to be free from Karnal bunt. No Karnal bunt has been detected in Utah. Utah exports much of its wheat to European and Pacific Rim nations. One-third of the U.S.'s \$5-billion wheat crop is exported.

"Utah must send a message to the countries that buy our wheat that we will take whatever steps necessary to ensure that Utah wheat remains disease free and wholesome," said Utah Commissioner of Agriculture, Cary Peterson. Peterson met with more than 20 leaders of the Utah wheat industry to update them on the Karnal bunt crisis, and take suggestions on how to protect Utah's \$40 million dollar wheat crop. There are approximately 1300 wheat farms in Utah producing about 185,000 acres of wheat.

Karnal bunt was detected for the first time in the U.S. in Arizona on March 8, 1996. Since then federal and state quarantines have banned the movement of infected wheat and farm machinery and vehicles.

Commissioner Peterson signed an emergency order on March 28, banning the importation of wheat, wheat seed and farm equipment from infected areas of Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and California.

"I don't think any of those infected Arizona lots got into Utah," said Commissioner Peterson. Immediately following the discovery of Karnal bunt, Utah ordered its grain inspectors to inventory existing lots of wheat and wheat seed in Utah. Utah ports-of-entry were also alerted to inspect for shipments of grain from infected areas.

The Utah testing program will begin in July 1996, during the wheat harvest season. Scientists from the USDA and UDA will test samples of wheat at 18 locations throughout Utah. The locations are: Newton, Cache Junction, Garland, Honeyville, Brigham City, Ogden, Kaysville, Draper, Heber City, Lehi, Myton, Roosevelt, Spanish Fork, Moroni, Delta, Minersville, Beryl, and Monticello.

The Utah testing program is expected to last from two to five years. Commissioner Peterson also called for universities and colleges in Utah to initiate research projects to focus on better understanding Karnal bunt, and its eradication.

Present at the meeting were representatives from: USU Extension Service, Utah Crop Improvement Assn., USDA-APHIS, Utah Seed Council, the LDS Church, Utah Farm Bureau Federation, Utah mill and elevator operators, Utah seed and feed dealers, and private wheat farmers.