

## Harvest tips

The following fact sheet has been developed in partnership with Cotton Seed Distributors.

### Time your defoliation

1. Apply before the onset of frost
2. Avoid application where rain is forecast
3. Await boll maturation
4. Consult your agronomist.

The defoliating effects of a chemical usually take around seven days to complete after application.

### When to start picking: rules of thumb

1. Hard seed (cracks in your teeth)
2. Free moisture on the lint is almost gone
3. While you might be tempted to start picking early in the morning or continue late into the night, remember these times are not ideal conditions and may push moisture limits.

### Harvest safety tips:

1. Develop and implement a harvest operation procedure that is specific to your farm.
2. Read and understand operation manual and basic safety procedures for all machinery before using.
3. Travel a safe speed around ground staff and limit unnecessary traffic around pickers.
4. Keep all machinery windows and mirrors clean and ensure all lights and alarms are in working order.

### Three major reasons for trash in the sample:

1. Poor defoliation
2. Picking too early
3. Poor picker set up.

### Remember the keys to quality picking are:

1. Cleanliness
2. Contamination free.

### When to stop picking: rules of thumb

1. When you can feel moisture at all on bolls
2. Moisture is evident on your vehicle
3. Blocked doors, throwing cotton out the front

4. Cotton reaches 10-13 per cent on moisture meter
5. Cotton coming out as a dense blob and not fluffy
6. Good picking conditions beyond 9.00pm are rare
7. When a handful of cotton is squeezed into a ball and then released, the moisture content is right if it springs back to near its original state.

### **When is cotton too wet to pick?**

Apart from obvious problems associated with spindle twist and damage caused to the picking head, cotton should not be harvested above moisture content of 12 per cent. At elevated moisture there is increased risk of fibre degradation, lowering grade due to yellowing or spotting associated with fungal contamination.

Seed that contains less than 12 per cent moisture will usually store for extended periods without significant quality loss.