

Cotton Seed Quality - Where It All Begins

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Producing a high yielding cotton crop begins with establishing a good stand. Planting high quality cottonseed is essential to beginning the season off right. With the current price of most cotton varieties and the increased use of new planting equipment, many producers are reducing seeding rates. Consequently, this places even more importance on planting high quality seed. Cotton seedlings often encounter multiple adverse stress conditions at the onset of the growing season. While high seedling vigor may not mitigate all of these factors, it can definitely help. One of the methods to determine vigor is through the use of the Cool-Warm Vigor Index (CWVI). Information provided by the CWVI test is not required by law; therefore it does not appear on the seed tag. However, some companies perform the Texas Cool Test (which is one of the components of the CWVI), and will provide this information upon request.

Cool-Warm Vigor Index Test The current information on the tag of a bag of cottonseed provides information on viability (Standard Germination Test percentage) conducted under ideal conditions. Most cottonseed is not planted under ideal conditions. In some cases seed can have high viability (germination percentage), but have low vigor. The CWVI will not necessarily mirror emergence in the field, but will provide more accurate data on the actual vigor of the seed/seed lots that are purchased. The CWVI combines information obtained from a Warm Germination Test and the Texas Cool Germination Test. The Warm Germination Test data are obtained from a test conducted at 68°F for 16 hours and 86°F for 8 hours on a daily basis, with germinated seedlings counted after 4 days. Testing methodology for this portion of the CWVI is essentially the same as that used for the Standard Germination Test that is printed on the seed tag. The difference is that for the Standard Germination Test, seedlings are counted at 7 days instead of 4. If actual Standard Germination Test data are used (7-day count instead of 4-day count), producers should realize that the 7-day values would very likely be greater. The Texas Cool Test data are obtained from a test conducted at 64°F with seedlings counted after 7 days. The Texas Cool Test data may be obtained from some seed companies or the CWVI can be determined by the following Texas Department of Agriculture Seed Laboratories:

Texas Dept. of Agriculture
Giddings Seed Lab
P.O. Box 629
Giddings, TX 78942
(979) 542-3691

Texas Dept. of Agriculture
Lubbock Seed Lab
4502 Englewood Ave.
Lubbock, TX 79414
(806) 799-0017

Texas Dept. of Agriculture
Stephenville Lab
241 E. McNeill
Stephenville, TX 76401
(254) 965-7333

To obtain CWVI analysis, submit a 1-pound representative sample of acid delinted seed to any of these TDA laboratories. A representative sample needs to consist of several bags from the same lot. Make sure to not combine lots or varieties. A separate sample should be sent for each variety and for each lot. Upon completion of the two tests, results are added together to provide the CWVI. Seed can then be classified in the following categories: Excellent = 160 or greater; Good = 140 - 159; Fair = 120 - 139; Poor - Less than 120. This information allows producers to make more informed decisions on planting time, and conditions of various seed lots. Seed with the highest possible vigor should be planted earlier in the season or when planting conditions are less than optimum. Lower vigor seed should be planted later in the season when soils have warmed or conditions are more optimum for cotton stand establishment.