

Broadcast Seeding Canola Tips



Broadcast vs Traditional Seeding Methods

Wet conditions and delayed seeding in Manitoba can prompt growers to consider alternative seeding options for small-seeded crops, like canola. Broadcast seeding canola is not a well-researched topic, and can have significant drawbacks compared to using a traditional drill or planter. This factsheet is intended to help guide broadcast seeding, understanding the risks involved.

In extremely wet and delayed years, it may be advantageous to seed a canola crop using a broadcast method, via an air boom on a ground floater or Valmar applicator. Tub spin spreaders are not recommended due to wind effects and small seed density leading to poor seed distribution.

Traditional Seeding

- Uniform seed distribution
- Better seed-to-soil contact
- Higher rate of seed survivability
- Longer waiting time to access wet fields

Broadcast Seeding

- Seed distribution varies via broadcast method
- Varying seed depth after incorporation
- Lighter machinery footprint
- Faster coverage of unseeded acres

Practical Tips

- Target broadcast seeding rates a pound or two above your normal seeding rate, to account for lower survivability from broadcasting – target a minimum of 10 seeds/ft².
- A shallow tillage pass, or harrow (and pack, if possible) once soon after broadcasting seed to cover seed with soil, and dislodge seed stranded on crop residue – twice over the field may pull up more seed than it covers. Avoid creating soil clods, or residue lumps and piles wherever possible.
- Broadcast canola together with at least the minimum required amount of phosphorus fertilizer. Canola needs early access to phosphorus, and consider applying all of the required amount with the seed, to meet crop P removal. Canola response to P is limited in warmer soils, and a higher broadcast rate than the more efficient banding method is unnecessary on warm soils.
- Communicate broadcast canola plans with your ag retailer and custom applicator as soon as possible. Wet springs have many farms looking for broadcast options, and there may be delays in accessing equipment.

What to Expect

- Seeding Rates** Higher seeding rates result in higher crop survivability, leading to increased stand density and benefits associated with improved weed management and reduced days to maturity.
- Broadcast Metering** Equipment used for broadcasting is not as refined as traditional seeding. Expect some misses, and increase seed coverage by increasing seed rate. Bulking up canola seed with phosphate fertilizer in a batch blender system may be necessary to aid in metering ultra-low canola seeding rates.
- Fertilizer Placement** Canola seed can be broadcast together with high rates of nitrogen and other fertilizers. However, canola seed mixed with fertilizer should not sit together for more than 24 hours, as fertilizer will damage seed coatings and decrease seed germination. Consider using urease inhibitors (*e.g.*, *Agrotain*) with broadcast nitrogen fertilizer destined for wet soils, since incorporation is so shallow.
- Field Residue** Large amounts of crop residue will impair broadcast seed contact with soil. Manage ahead of seeding, or disturb once after seeding to dislodge any stranded seed. High residue amounts can increase frost risk damage, or prevent seed contact with soil. Fields with heavy residue mats are not good candidates for broadcast seeding.
- Crop Establishment** Canola establishment after broadcasting can vary widely, often from 20 to 80% emergence. Even a low crop density (2-3 plants/ft²) seeded before the first week of June can yield better than a higher density crop sown later. A few moderate rains the following weeks after broadcasting are critical to help establish the crop, and prevent shallow seeded plants from drying out.
- Yield Expectations** Broadcast crops tend to have season-long issues with establishment and crop uniformity. Highest yielding crops from 2011 were crops that were fertilized early and harrowed to improve seed-to-soil contact, while research from 1977 showed similar yields in traditional and broadcast seeded canola ([CanolaWatch](#), [Clarke et. al](#)).

Crop Insurance

Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation (MASC) [will insure broadcast-seeded canola](#), provided it meets two conditions:

1. Seed must be incorporated into the soil via mechanical means on or before the [seeding deadline](#)
2. Crop must fully establish in order to be eligible for AgrilInsurance.

Contact Us

This factsheet was developed by the Manitoba Agriculture Oilseeds Specialist.

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