

Specialty Grains Require Special Handling, Cleaning

Increased interest in heritage grains that are produced and processed locally has income potential for farmers large and small. However, two things are necessary if an operation is going to be successful, according to specialty grain grower Robert Perry. You have to have a market, and you need to produce a high-quality product.

"If you don't have a market for your grain, the high prices you hear about don't mean anything," says Perry. "If you want to grow half an acre, that's great if you have a baker with a mill that wants to buy the grain from you. However, if you want to go wholesale, you have to have high-quality, vomitoxin-free grain."

Perry grows barley under contract to a malt house. Last year the vomitoxin was above 0.1 percent, and it all went for feed barley instead.

"If you have a ton of grain that isn't up to standards, it has no value," he says.

Perry uses a Lightfoot screen cleaner made by American Metal Fab to process his grain. He also uses it to demonstrate grain processing to interested New York growers as part of the Value-Added Grains Project, sponsored by the Northeast Organic Farmers Association (www.nofany.org).

While a good combine removes hulls on wheat and barley, removing weed seeds, chaff and other non-grain material requires special equipment like the Lightfoot.

"I also use an old Clipper fanning mill," says Perry. "It does a good job cleaning small batches of grain."

Thor Oechsner has earned a reputation for high-quality grain and flour with top rank bakers and chefs in New York City. He raises small grains on his 1,200-acre farm and is a part owner of Farmer Ground Flour. In order to meet growing demand, he also contracts with other farmers to grow grain for the mill.

"We raise food grade grain for our flour milling and also to sell to distilleries and malt houses," explains Oechsner.

He agrees that the demand for certain varieties of wheat, barely and rye is really taking off. However, it has to be clean and of a certain quality.

"The first basic piece of equipment is the rotary grain cleaner or air screen cleaner. It has a rotating drum with screens to take out big stuff and fines," says Oechsner.

He emphasizes that grain needs to be at the right moisture content and in good condition to store for a long time. "Every time we move it, it goes through a barrel cleaner," he says. "We also have a fan that blows a hard stream of air across the flow of grain as it comes out of the truck to be unloaded."

Oechsner also uses a gravity table. As the grain moves across it, air blows fines and lighter material away from the grain flow.

"An air screen cleaner can clean for shape and somewhat for weight by controlling the air blast," he says. "However, certain weeds like vetch, corn cockle and wild radish are exactly the same diameter as wheat seed and pretty close to the same weight. The gravity table can take out things that are the same shape, but have slightly different weights."

Round seeds like vetch and corn cockle may require even another machine. For these seeds, Oechsner suggests using an indent cleaner. It is a metal drum with round dimples or pockets in the screen. As the drum rotates, the grain falls away, and the round vetch and corn cockle stay in the pockets, falling out later and separating from the grain.

Oechsner advises watching newspaper ads and online sites for old equipment. He found an air screen cleaner and other equipment when an old dry bean plant was being sold off.

"The screens are really expensive if not



Specialty grain grower Robert Perry uses an old Clipper fanning mill to clean small batches of grain.

included with a used one," says Oechsner. "I bought one from an old farmer in Ohio for \$250, and each new screen cost \$250."

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Paint Additive Helps Eliminate Odors

"My wife said to get rid of the smoking odors or her. Painting with Ionic Paint Additive was cheaper. I still have my wife and no odors."

That's a quote from a customer who says his home has remained odorless even though he kept smoking cigarettes, according to Bert Gruder, who has been selling the Ionic additive since 2011. The fine powder is a blend of 27 natural rare-earth minerals that turns painted walls into air purification systems.

"The minerals emit negative electrically-charged ions," Gruder explains. "They attract positively-charged dust particles (including odors absorbed in the particles) and the added weight makes them drop out of the air."

The odor is neutralized, and the air purification continues as long as the top painted surface includes the additive, Gruder says. The additive can be used with oil or water-based paints in any color, except pure white, Gruder says, though off-white works. Add one packet (\$38.45 including shipping) to each gallon.

Most customers are smokers, but many pet owners — especially cat owners — tell

Gruder that visitors don't even know they have animals in the house since they painted with the additive. Property owners who used to paint every time a smoking tenant moved out, tell him that now they just paint once with the Ionic paint additive. Other customers include people with allergies and managers of nursing home facilities.

For bonus air purification, Gruder suggests painting a scrap of plastic with additive-enhanced paint and attaching it at a right angle to the backside of a vent inside your ductwork.

"The airflow will not be restricted. As the return air flows across the surfaces painted with the Ionic additive, anions are discharged into the ductwork, reducing odors and toxins," Gruder explains.

His website explains many applications, and occasionally offers special pricing.

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Handy Piglet Cradle Saves Workers From Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Helmut Janz has had two surgeries for carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) in the 20 years he has worked in the hog industry. As manager of a barn for Maple Leaf Agri-Farms in Manitoba, he decided to do something about it when two of his employees were also diagnosed with the painful condition.

Janz designed and built a piglet processing arm to hold young pigs safely while workers do tasks like dock tails, castrate and orally inject vitamins and minerals. The key component is a universal joint that allows it to be easily turned for access to the piglet's head and tail. Janz welded the top of the joint to a cradle of 1/8-in. bent steel. The piglet is secured with a Velcro strap in the cradle, which is lined with foam.

Workers keep one hand over the pig to steady it, which is much easier than holding a 3 to 5-lb. squirming piglet, Janz says. With hundreds of piglets processed every week, the cradle eliminates repetitive stress and strain on worker's arms and wrists.

Since making the first unit 1 1/2 years ago, he has made several more to mount on employees' work carts for workers in 20 barns in the Maple Leaf Farm system. Each unit costs about \$400, Janz says, but they will last for years.

The invention won Janz the F.X. Aherne Prize for Innovative Pork Production in Canada. While he doesn't personally benefit financially from the device, he would like to see other hog production companies use it.

While processing slowed at first as employees learned to use the device, they



Piglet processing arm is designed to hold young pigs safely while workers do tasks. A universal joint allows arm to be easily turned for access to piglet's head and tail.

quickly got back up to normal speed. Within 2 weeks, the two employees with CTS were pain-free and did not need surgery.

"Workers tell me now that if I took the processing arms away, they would quit," Janz says.

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