



From the Field – Quality issues

Based on sound kernel recovery (SKR) results from the consignments already delivered and tested this season, we note the following:

High immaturity levels, internal discolouration and small nut size have been recorded in the SKR results among orchards where previously it has not been a major concern not only in this region but also in Queensland. These issues resulting in an overall lower kernel recovery are not confined to a particular area, tree variety, nut size or caused from management procedures; it is an example of how each season changes.

Husk spot is not the sole agent causing premature nut shed as the outer appearance of the immature nut is unblemished with clean husk and shell. It is not until the nut is dried then water sorted/floatated that the tell-tale signs become evident. This is not an unusual phenomenon although the amount of immaturity is higher than previous years. Climatic conditions are a part of the cause of immature nut drop but the in-depth answer is unknown.

In several examples, growers supplying nut in shell (NIS), already hand and water sort/float their consignment, yet continue to receive high readings of immaturity on SKR results. The problem has been the moisture content at the time of water sorting/floatating: if the moisture content is too high the immature nut will not float. Floating between 10% and 15% (dependant on variety) ensures a thorough culling of immature nut. The majority of growers have difficulty achieving the optimum moisture level resulting in the excessive readings on NIS that had already been through the grower's system on farm.

Internal discolouration and a higher percentage of small nut has also been prominent throughout the intake. Both appear uniformly and are not contained to variety nor growing region. 'A' varieties, known for large kernel, have not been exempt from the reduction in nut size. Small nut could possibly be a reflection of the massive loss of flowers at the beginning of the season caused from pollen wash out due to heavy and untimely rain. It may be that the trees have tried to compensate for this loss with early flowering and as a result the production and the later nut has suffered despite no change in management practices. Those who continue their fertiliser program still suffered from this problem.

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