

Don't Burn Grain Storage Bags



As Saskatchewan's agricultural industry grows, the amount of plastic waste generated on farms is increasing. While the use of new and innovative plastic products provides benefits to the agricultural community, farmers and ranchers need to be aware of the associated waste management responsibilities.

Saskatchewan agricultural producers use approximately 20,000 grain bags every year for the temporary storage of grain and silage. Each of these bags weighs 135-315 kg (300-700 lbs). These bags are intended for one-time use and are unsuitable for re-use. Other products, such as plastic twine, silage bags, bale wrap and netting, which are manufactured from plastics similar to the grain bags, constitute an additional portion of the waste management challenge.

So what do you do with a 300 kg plastic bag when you need to dispose of it? Unfortunately, some producers are burning the bags.

The chemical reactions that occur during the burning of plastics, such

as polyethylene grain storage bags, produce an array of toxic substances that are detrimental to both human health and our environment. The residue from burning these bags releases highly toxic materials into the atmosphere and potentially into the soil where toxins could impact water and soil quality. When materials containing chlorine are used, dioxins and furans may form, which can cause health effects ranging from cancer to nervous system disorders.

The Ministry of Environment is working with industry partners and stakeholders to develop a province-wide stewardship program for recycling agricultural plastics. The program will initially focus on the collection and recycling of grain bags, only.

Currently, farmers can recycle their grain bags through the Grain Bag Recycling Pilot Project, operated by Simply Agriculture Solutions. Collection sites are located across the province in Cudworth, Hirsch, Humboldt, Kelvington, Macoun, Marshall, Milestone, Moose Jaw, Mossbank, Oungre, Prince Albert, Rush Lake, Saskatoon and Unity.

If recycling is not an option, producers should check to see if their nearest landfill accepts used grain bags, or store the bags on the farm until a province-wide program is up and running.

Open burning of products such as grain bags is prohibited under Saskatchewan's Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2010

For more information, please contact the Client Service Office at 1-800-567-4224.