

# The TGA Insight



## Playing the Numbers Game: Using uniform emergence as a method of controlling Flea Beetles

- Danielle Chamberland

Flea beetles were a major concern last spring in a large portion of our trading area. The combination of dry and cold weather slowed canola growth during its most vulnerable stage, cotyledon – 4 leaf stage, allowing flea beetle damage to reach pesticide application thresholds. And with the wide open fall we had in 2022 and the continued dry soil conditions, I am expecting similar pressure this spring. Strategies to prevent flea beetle damage should begin in the fall with crop residue management and choosing appropriate insecticidal seed treatments on your canola seed. But there are a few things in the spring that can make a big difference in your efforts to mitigate flea beetle damage.

When talking about flea beetle pressure, it's all a numbers game. Its about the number of flea beetles vs. the number of plants in the field. And the key to being on the winning side of those numbers is uniform seeding and emergence.

A big contributor to un-even crop emergence is seeding speed, especially in canola. Whether its soil being thrown over to the next furrow or the implement bouncing down the field, half inch seeded canola will emerge before canola that is at 2 inches. This creates a situation where you get two different flushes of canola at the cotyledon stage. When targeting seven to eight plants/square foot and only half of the seed emerges initially, those three canola plants/square foot become completely overwhelmed with flea beetles. A few days later the rest of the canola emerges, which the flea beetles are then able to attack as well after they had already decimated the first wave.

When all of the canola emerges at the same time, twenty flea beetles spread out between seven plants results in much less damage compared to twenty beetles spread over just three plants.

What we do in terms of crop establishment, can have a big impact on whether or not we will have to go back in for a pesticide application. Getting your canola crop off to a quick and even start will pay dividends when battling against flea beetles.

