

# Fertilising a solution for an air seeder



□ DE Engineers spiral silos are ideal for storing fertiliser. They have smooth inner walls to prevent urea from holding up.

By **KEN WILSON**

IN farming there are nearly always solutions to problems.

And that's the case for Quairading farmer Greg Richards who two years ago stopped a frustrating task of storing prilled urea.

"It was time consuming setting up three 20 tonne field bins for urea storage to transfer into the air seeder and it meant we could not use them for seed storage," Mr Richards said.

"And making sure field bins were undercover was always a problem."

Mr Richards said he called DE Engineers principal Kevin Prater in 2018 and asked if he could make him a fertiliser silo.

He is now seeing the double value of the commission as the silo is used to store oats over harvest and urea during seeding.

Mr Richards said "logistically it's easier to auger fertiliser in and out of the silo".

"It holds 50 tonnes of oats and about 60t of urea so it has become a dual-purpose unit for us which works brilliantly," he said.

According to Mr Prater, "hundreds of farmers across WA have been using our standard silos to store granulated fertiliser for

decades without any problems".

"But with this silo we constructed it with a spiral body, which means it is nearly twice as strong and has smooth inner walls to prevent urea from holding up," Mr Prater said.

"At first Greg was sceptical about using our standard cone but when I guaranteed the silo would work and offered to take the silo away and put a steeper base cone if there were any problems, he decided to go ahead.

"The end result is that Mr Richards has saved thousands of dollars.

"Many people think they need a steeper-angled cone for fertiliser but it is unnecessary because the angle at which most granular fertiliser will flow is similar to grain.

"Steeper cones often cause material to bridge in the cone causing problems and this increases silo costs as does plastic or rubber coatings which are unnecessary unless you store wet product or your silo leaks."

Mr Prater said his company had recently built specialised five metre diameter spiral silos for a customer in Munglinup who liked the idea of wider, shorter silos (about 6m tall) that could hold more than 60t of fertiliser.

"In fact our standard 63t field bin easily doubles as a

fertiliser bin (auger restricted) with a wide mouth top using 1500 millimetre-wide roofing sheets," Mr Prater said.

"By using the wider sheets, "greater flexibility is obtained as they can be pushed back out of the way when opened to create a gap of about three metres at the bottom and nearly a metre at the top.

"This allows plenty of room for positioning augers to create better throw angles, so that all of the available space is utilised and that

might translate to an extra two or three tonnes."

Mr Prater said his company was busy manufacturing silos and field bins to meet harvest orders.

"Despite what the world is going through, it's been a positive start to the year and I would encourage anybody who wants a silo to place a no-obligation order now to ensure on-farm delivery before harvest starts," he said.

□ **More information: phone DE Engineers on 9274 2632.**



□ DE Engineers' standard cone design works well in its new fertiliser mobile field bin. "You don't need a steeper-angled cone for fertiliser," company principal Kevin Prater said.