

PRODUCER PROFILES

SASKATCHEWAN



David Sefton Broadview, SK

David Sefton farms with his brother Bert and son Scott north of Broadview, Sk. The Sefton's realized the benefits of winter wheat when they first grew the crop in the early 80's and they have seeded winter wheat ever since. Economics is the main reason they have stuck with the crop all these years. Winter wheat was the most profitable crop on the Sefton farm this past year due to early maturity.

The Sefton's have been seeding with a Conservapak for the last 2 years and are putting all the nitrogen down as anhydrous ammonia at the time of seeding. This method saves them from having to make an extra pass to broadcast fertilizer. In the spring they control winter annuals and other broadleaf weeds using a good broadleaf product such as Frontline. Dave's goal is to increase their winter wheat acreage to 50 % of their total acres to take full advantage of the economics and time management of winter wheat.

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MANITOBA



The Footes Killarney, MB

Blair and Judy Foote have been farming north of Killarney, Manitoba since 1981. The Foote's started as a small mixed farm gradually increasing in size to a 2100 acre specialized grain operation that also custom seeds.

Blair started growing winter wheat to spread out their workload at harvest. By starting harvest earlier, the need for a second combine is eliminated. Once the winter wheat is harvested they can bale the straw before the rest of harvest begins. If the weather is poor, winter wheat can be left standing to be straight cut.

Blair says "Winter wheat is one of the best paying crops if you market it right". This past year Blair signed a contract for 25 bu/ac for \$4.40/bu and sold the rest at \$3.00/bu off board. Blair points out that you can move winter wheat in big quantities and not have to wait for a quota. Judy adds that they sell right off the combine and don't have to store it, saving bin space for crops that need to be held for better marketing opportunities.

Overall, the Foote's like winter wheat because it fits in well with their operation and helps to keep their small farm viable. Blair said that his youngest son, Brent, would like to farm, and you need to have a viable farm in order for your son to come on board.

ALBERTA



Theo Thirsk Camrose, AB

Theo Thirsk, alongside his brother Greg and brother-in-law Lloyd Herder, operate Thirsk Seed Farms about 50 kilometers northwest of Camrose, Alberta. Winter wheat has become an important part of their operation by increasing the cropping options on the farm, while expanding their seed portfolio.

The first challenge for growing winter wheat is to have a stubble field ready when it is time to seed as experts recommend seeding winter wheat into standing stubble. Theo has tried growing winter wheat on canola stubble and a poorly established flax crop (failed because of hail) that was sprayed out early. Snow cover caught by standing stubble helps insulate the crop throughout the winter and improves winter survival. Despite this recommendation, Theo's best success has been on pea stubble. "There's not much stubble left after we harvest our peas," Theo admits, "but we almost always have pea ground ready when it's time to seed the winter wheat". Theo direct seeds with a 64 foot Bourgault air drill. He generally mid-row bands nitrogen fertilizer according to his soil test recommendations. "We always seed at a one inch depth to just cover the seeds," Theo explains. The first year Theo planted winter wheat, he seeded it into very dry ground and was amazed at how well it grew.

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Winter Wheat ADVISER

Winter Wheat
DELIVERS
the **GREEN**

WHAT'S YOUR CONTINGENCY PLAN?

By Ken Gross, P. Ag.

Spring planning is critical for a successful winter wheat crop. After all, the time to begin planning a winter wheat crop is now. Select a target field for your winter wheat and seed that field this spring to an early-maturing crop like canola. This will ensure that the spring stubble crop will be harvested in time for a winter wheat crop to be seeded this fall. Or will it?

Experienced producers realize that last fall wasn't the only year where the canola harvest was delayed. In the fall of 2002, a moist cool spell delayed canola harvest in a number of areas making stubble unavailable during the critical winter wheat seeding window.

A prudent strategy is to have a contingency plan to fall back on should canola or other target stubble be unavailable. Grain crops like spring oat or barley can provide suitable stubble. Other options include polish canola or an alfalfa stand that has been recently taken out of production. Spring wheat stubble would be the least desirable alternative due to the risk of infection from the wheat streak mosaic virus. The virus can be avoided if the "green bridge" is eliminated with glyphosate and seeding is delayed for 10 to 14 days to ensure complete dry-down of all green growth. And remember, for best results seed the contingency field early too.

Other considerations:

Weatherman-ager is a tool that can help producers with spring planning. Using long-term weather records across the prairies, this tool identifies the likelihood that your spring "stubble" crop will be harvested in time for your winter wheat seeding. Weatherman-ager is available by contacting your local DUC Agologist or online at www.wintercereals.ca.

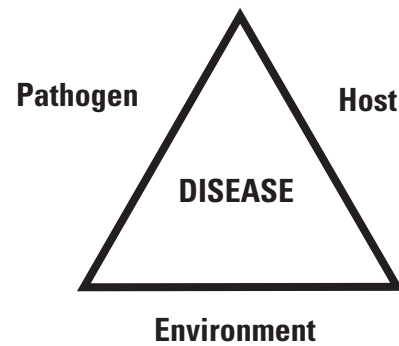
Selecting an early maturing variety of canola may be the most important decision in having stubble fields available for seeding this fall. Last year the early seeded, early maturing varieties were harvested three weeks earlier than varieties seeded after the May snow storm. Check your seed guide for early varieties. And let's hope Mother nature cooperates this year!



ASSESSING DISEASE RISK IN YOUR WINTER WHEAT CROP

By Larry Durand, P. Ag.

Winter wheat, like all crops grown in Western Canada, is susceptible to a range of diseases and producers should take steps to address the risk of infection. Using what plant pathologists call the 'Disease Triangle' and its components will go a long way to ensure proper disease management decisions. The three sides of the triangle represent the 3 conditions necessary for disease to occur: the presence of a disease pathogen, the presence of a susceptible host or crop, and environmental conditions conducive to disease infection.



A good starting point for addressing risk of infection is to assess if the pathogen is present. A seed test will determine if seed borne diseases, such as common bunt, are present. Assessing field history, including crop rotation and past disease observations, can determine risk of soil and crop residue borne diseases such as tan spot. Geographic location will often determine the risk of having a particular disease pathogen. For example, producers in Manitoba and Southeastern Saskatchewan are more likely to experience problems with rust. Southern Alberta producers are at a higher risk for bunt.

The next step is to assess how your winter wheat variety, the host, will stack up against any potential disease

Variety	RESISTANCE TO			
	Stem Rust	Leaf Rust	Bunt	Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus
AC Bellatrix	VP	P	G	P
CDC Buteo	G	G	P	P
CDC Clair	P	P	P	P
CDC Falcon	VG	G	P	P
CDC Harrier	G	P	P	P
CDC Kestrel	P	P	P	P
McClintock	VG	VG	P	P
CDC Osprey	P	P	P	P
Radiant	P	P	P	G
CDC Raptor	VG	G	P	P

pathogen. Fortunately, new and much improved disease resistance has been bred into recently released varieties allowing producers to virtually eliminate the risk of certain diseases. Rust for example, was a major threat in the 1980's but new varieties such as CDC Buteo, CDC Raptor and McClintock have good and very good rust resistance ratings. Knowing what pathogens have potential to cause problems will help producers choose varieties that are resistant. At present winter wheat varieties are available with resistance to leaf & stem rust, bunt, and the wheat curl mite which is the vector for wheat streak mosaic virus. It's also important to note that management, over-or under-fertilization, chemical damage, insect damage, and thick crop canopies, can all impact a variety's predisposition to disease risk.

Environmental conditions are the third side of the disease triangle and can have a large impact on disease infection. Extended high moisture conditions in the crop provide good opportunity for disease infection and development. It's important to remember that environ-

mental conditions in the crop canopy will be different than in the air above. Field scouting should always be an important component of disease management but it becomes more important under conditions favoring disease development, when the pathogen is known to be present and when your variety is susceptible to infection. Under those circumstances a fungicide application may be necessary.

When making a decision to apply fungicide producers should ensure that they correctly diagnose the disease that is doing the damage. Leaf spotting or discoloration may be physiological or due to chemical or physical injury. Producers should consider cost of fungicide in assessment. Manufacturer rebates may make an otherwise unfeasible application feasible. Lastly, producers should consider the best timing for fungicide application. For most foliar applied fungicides the best timing is at early flag leaf. There is very little scientific evidence that suggests earlier applications are agronomically or economically beneficial.

Spring N Applications – Is your goal high yield and high protein?



By Susanne Brummelhuis, P. Ag.

Winter wheat growers have many options for nitrogen form, rate and timing of application. April is here and producers opting for split applications or applying all the N requirements in spring need to make their choices soon.

Spring nitrogen applications can be adjusted according to expected yields based on predicted moisture levels. A big advantage or is it? Many producers were caught off guard last year when late season rainfall caused delays in fertilizer application. Many ended up with low protein winter wheat because of a shortage of N.

Producers should be applying sufficient nitrogen fertilizer for both yield and protein. A rule of thumb is that if protein is less than 11.5%, insufficient N was applied for top yields. Apply N for yield and adequate protein levels will follow suit. The timing of fertilizer applications can also be important in determining protein content. An adequate early application of nitrogen is essential to establish yield

potential. Nitrogen applied at the boot to heading stage has little effect on yield, but can increase protein. Therefore, the supply of nitrogen to the plant should be maintained through the boot stage to provide for optimum yield and protein potential.

Split application of nitrogen, by applying a mid-season application at the boot stage, could be considered as a way to increase protein. With this approach, the risk associated with applying a single, high nitrogen application early in the season is reduced. However, recent Alberta Agriculture research has shown that in-crop granular and foliar nitrogen applications at tillering, boot and anthesis growth stages do not consistently increase grain protein. Therefore, later in-crop applications are less reliable than applying additional N fertilizer early.

There are risks associated with top-dressing nitrogen. Broadcasting ammonium nitrate (34-0-0) or dribble banding liquid nitrogen requires moisture to move the nitrogen into the root zone. Dry conditions

can temporarily strand the nitrogen at the soil surface. Urea (46-0-0) fertilizer is not recommended for broadcast applications as volatilization losses can be high.

Winter wheat yields more than spring wheat and should be fertilized according to its higher yield potential. In Saskatchewan, in the past 10 years winter wheat has out yielded spring wheat by 21% and in the past 5 years it has out yielded it by 35% (Alberta and Manitoba have similar results). Thus, 21-35% higher nitrogen rates may not be an unreasonable recommendation for your winter wheat.

Ideally, producers should use a fall soil test to determine nitrogen requirements before planting. There is a narrow window to meet nitrogen requirements for winter wheat with spring applications. Nitrogen has to make it to the root zone early in the season because the plants start to accumulate N rapidly at the 5-leaf stage and set yield potential very early on in the spring. The key to winter wheat spring fertility is matching rate to target yield (protein) and applying early.

Spring ASSESSMENT

- ❖ Don't be too quick to judge establishment, early growth or brown leaves may not mean what you think.
- ❖ For best assessment results, delay final inspection until as late as possible.
- ❖ New root growth from the crown tissue signals a healthy re-growing plant.
- ❖ Remember winter wheat's tillering ability, a thin stand can still produce satisfactory yields.
- ❖ Early spring fertility and weed control are both key to a plant's spring recovery and vigor.
- ❖ If re-seeding is necessary, avoid seeding a cereal, especially wheat to reduce risk of wheat streak mosaic virus.