

Media Release

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Winter wheat holds its own

Acres only slightly down from last year: Stats Canada

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, December 5, 2008 – Winter wheat is here to stay on Canada's prairies. Statistics Canada just released its seeded acre numbers for this fall and found that acreage is only slightly down from last year despite a late harvest and wet fall.

"Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) congratulates prairie growers for their tenacity in getting the winter wheat crop in the ground after a fall that was not very forgiving," said Paul Thoroughgood, DUC's regional agrologist. "This just proves the value winter wheat provides to farmers when grown in rotation."

The seeded acreage for this fall is 1.245 million acres, down from the 1.5 million acres seeded last year. The provincial breakdown for winter wheat acres seeded in 2008 is 475,000 in Manitoba, 450,000 in Saskatchewan and 320,000 in Alberta.

"Until 2008, winter wheat acres on the Prairies have increased every year since 2004. This year ends up being very similar to the seeded acreage of 2006," said Thoroughgood. "New varieties, improved marketing options and the agronomic advantages provided by winter wheat have made it an attractive choice for many growers. Farmers know growing winter wheat is a great hedge against climate."

According to Thoroughgood, some other winter wheat benefits include:

- Higher yields: 15 to 40 per cent higher than spring sown wheat. Available varieties are suitable for milling, feed and ethanol markets
- Great ecological mechanism to manage development of pesticide resistance in wild oats
- Pest Avoidance: Avoids common wheat pests such as orange blossom wheat midge and wheat stem sawfly, eliminating insecticide applications
- Disease Avoidance: Matures earlier, so escapes disease such as fusarium head blight.

The increase in winter wheat acres is also beneficial to spring nesting waterfowl, particularly northern pintails, a species that has declined since the late 1970s. This benefit to waterfowl has led DUC to invest in excess of \$3.5 million in support of variety development, agronomic research, producer group support and financial incentives to producers in the past seven years.

DUC works with Canadian farmers, ranchers and landowners to help implement sustainable agricultural and environmental practices that also improve their bottom line.

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Conserving Canada's Wetlands

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