



## **MEDIA RELEASE:**

### **Harvest—the ideal time to seed winter wheat**

**August 25, 2010** (Calgary, Alberta)—With harvest now upon farmers across the province, the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission is encouraging them to also think about seeding. Depending on growing conditions, farmers have a two- to four-week window to plant winter wheat this fall.

Planting winter wheat has a number of benefits, says Rick Istead, the executive director of the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission.

“Winter wheat sown into stubble or weather-destroyed fields provides excellent soil conservation for the fall and winter and will produce an early crop in the next growing season,” Istead says. “With farmers undoubtedly facing extra workload and pressure next spring, winter wheat is a way to spread out the workload.”

“Farmers may be feeling stressed about harvest, but there’s still lots of time to seed winter wheat,” says AWWPC chairman Kent Erickson of Irma, Alta. “With the equipment many farmers have today, it takes just a couple of mornings to put in a quarter-section of winter wheat. It might seem like a lot to do at this time of year, but where I’m at we have a couple of months to harvest and usually only about 25 days to seed in the spring.”

In Alberta, winter wheat is typically sown from mid-August to late-September and harvested the following season in late July to early August. This year, winter wheat harvest and seeding are later. The crop is traditionally grown in southern Alberta, but is increasingly being produced in central and northern Alberta including the Peace Country.

Istead says AWWPC typically recommends farmers adopt “a plan, prepare and plant approach” to incorporating winter wheat into their crop rotations. “This year, we’re encouraging farmers to gain an advantage from the late harvest.”

A recent check of certified winter wheat seed growers in Alberta found adequate supplies of good quality seed available. For a complete listing, check the AWWPC website at [www.wintercereals.ca](http://www.wintercereals.ca).

Winter wheat generally produces a higher yielding crop (up to 30 per cent) earlier in the crop year, while also helping to reduce input costs and spreading out farm workloads.

With good snow cover, winter wheat can survive air temperatures as low as -40° C. This is most often achieved by sowing into canola stubble, which does the best job of trapping snow and keeping soil temperatures warm enough for overwintering. Erickson says some farmers also seed winter wheat into pea stubble, although the practice is not as widespread.

Research by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development shows that when a cereal crop such as winter wheat follows canola, yields can increase 10 to 20 per cent.

Winter wheat also helps minimize wind and water erosion, plus reduces the disturbance of nesting waterfowl, giving them a better nesting environment.

Farmers developing their seeding plans can find more detailed information on the *Growing Winter Wheat* pages of the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission/ Ducks Unlimited Canada website ([www.wintercereals.ca](http://www.wintercereals.ca)).

The Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission is a provincial grower organization focused on a strong and sustainable winter wheat industry for the benefit of all Alberta producers. The AWWPC leads efforts to make winter wheat a viable crop option by supporting innovative research, developing valued-added marketing programs, and providing producers with relevant and timely information.

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