

# More Options to Manage Midge

Toolbox expands for midge-tolerant wheat growers with first-ever durum variety.

**THE** toolbox for growers who protect against orange blossom wheat midge just got larger. New for the 2016 growing season are three new varieties of midge-tolerant wheat: Proven Seed's CDC Titanium VB and SeCan's AAC Foray VB and AAC Marchwell VB.

"Growers have had CWRS wheat since the beginning, but they now have a full list of options with a broader selection of CPS reds and, for the first time, a durum variety," says Todd Hyra, business manager, Western Canada, SeCan. "They really do have more tools in the toolbox to protect themselves from the damaging pest that can significantly reduce crop yield and grade."

The varietal blends provide an "interspersed refuge system" that disrupts the midge's ability to produce resistant offspring, preventing a build-up of the resistant midge population. As with all midge-tolerant wheat, the new varieties offer this built-in protection and uncompromised agronomics.

The addition of more wheat classes is an exciting development for the technology that reached a five-year milestone last year. Since 2010, midge-tolerant wheat has revolutionized the way growers manage midge. The varieties eliminate the use of insecticide as a control method. Instead, midge protection is bred into the varieties via Sm1, a midge-tolerant gene.

## Keep Midge Top-of-Mind

Hyra cautions that midge may not be on everyone's radar this year.

"It is not as top-of-mind as it once was. I credit midge-tolerant wheat for that. When you're not spraying, it is keeping the midge population in balance, allow-



**"Growers have had CWRS wheat since the beginning, but they now have a full list of options with a broader selection of CPS reds and, for the first time, a durum variety."**

—Todd Hyra

ing the beneficial parasites to do their job," he says. "Thanks to the consistent use of midge-tolerant wheat, we may never see peaks and valleys of midge pressure again."

Producers in the Peace River area won't forget when a midge infestation caught everyone off-guard during the 2013 growing season. For 2016, the Alberta forecast calls for fairly light midge pressure.

"That's a good news story, but at the same time, there is no economic disadvantage to using midge-tolerant wheat," says Hyra. "If the genetics work for you, why not have that protection in case of a flare-up? I'd encourage producers who have been using midge-tolerant wheat, and have had midge pressure in the past, to continue replenishing their stocks by either planning to purchase new certified seed or to have farm-saved seed that's in compliance with the stewardship requirements."

## Stewardship Remains Strong

The requirements Hyra is referring to are spelled out in the Stewardship Agreement that is signed by every producer who buys midge-tolerant wheat. It limits the use of farm-saved seed to one generation past certified seed, keeping the refuge at the desired level. This is essential to preserving midge tolerance.

Fortunately, stewardship of the technology remains high. Results from the annual customer survey in 2015 show that 94 per cent of midge-tolerant wheat growers believe that stewardship is critical. This number has increased each year since the launch.

Hyra is looking forward to continued support from growers who now have 12 different midge-tolerant wheat varieties to choose from. "I'd encourage them to try some of the newer classes to give them some different marketing opportunities while continuing to benefit from the same protection they've always had."