



ARTICLE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Worried About Wheat Midge?

Prairie farmers realize the value of midge tolerant wheat.

DECEMBER 10, 2012 – From drought to excess moisture to disease pressure, 2012 offered a variety of cropping challenges across the Prairies. However, a growing number of farmers are putting at least one worry aside – damage from wheat midge.

“Midge tolerant wheat varieties are the answer for us,” says Blair Rempel, a farmer and seed grower near Nipawin, Saskatchewan. Rempel had his first plot of midge tolerant wheat in 2009, and in 2012, seeded all of his wheat acres with midge tolerant varieties.

“We originally discovered that we had a midge problem in the early 80’s and, after a few years, started using insecticides for control,” says Rempel. “However, it requires very careful monitoring and you’re never really totally sure if you are going to get value out of spraying or not.”

When Rempel was in his first few years trying the technology, the midge tolerant varieties always stood out from the others whenever he did a comparison in yield. “I was very happy with their performance again this year,” he says, noting he grew both AC® Unity VB and AC® Vesper VB this year. “For the wet year that we had, the wheat was the outstanding crop – averaging about 48 bushels per acre with good quality.”

“The biggest benefit for us is to not have to worry so much about midge and potential problems from it. They’re just real good yielding varieties so there is no downside to growing the technology.”

Brad Basset, who farms near Bruno, Saskatchewan, also started growing midge tolerant wheat four years ago for peace of mind. “Spraying is so busy all the time, so the midge tolerant wheat gives you a bit of relief because you don’t have to be there at the perfect time,” says Basset, who planted about 4,000 acres of AC® Goodeve VB in 2012.

“There was one year where the midge pressure was so bad and everyone else was spraying that we were tempted to spray our midge tolerant wheat acres too,” he says. “However when we went in the field you could only find the odd midge, and it turned out not to hurt the grade or yield.”

While this new technology is very effective, it does require proper stewardship in order to keep it viable for future generations. Farmers are required to sign a Midge Tolerant Wheat Stewardship Agreement, which limits the use of farm-saved seed to one generation past Certified seed. This step keeps the interspersed refuge at the desired level of 10% of the plant population, preventing a build-up of resistant midge.

“The interspersed refuge system seems to be working well,” says Basset, noting you just need to plan ahead for your seed purchases. “We’re really impressed with the way it yields so why change a good thing.”

Rempel agrees. “The midge tolerant wheat approach is definitely a boon to farming here,” he says. “The stewardship program makes sense and I hope this will extend the life of the technology long beyond when I farm.”

Visit www.midgetolerantwheat.ca to learn more about the varieties and how the interspersed refuge system works.

This article has been brought to you by the Midge Tolerant Wheat Stewardship Team, a broad industry coalition representing plant breeders, government, seed growers, seed distributors and producer groups.

-30-

For more information, please visit www.midgetolerantwheat.ca or contact the following Co-Chairs of the Midge Tolerant Wheat Stewardship Team:

Mike Espeseth
(306) 975-0365
MikeEspeseth@westerngrains.com

Brenda Trask
(613) 592-8600 x225
btrask@secan.com