



## ARTICLE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Midge Tolerant Wheat Offers a Win-Win**

Varietal blends deliver sustainability advantages for growers and the environment.

**MARCH 13, 2012** – More Manitoba growers are arming themselves with midge tolerant wheat, an effective and sustainable tool in the fight against wheat midge. The devastating insect pest can reduce crop yield and lower the market grade of harvested grain causing losses of up to \$75 per acre.

Growers who seed midge tolerant wheat varieties ensure their crop quality and yield aren't compromised by the pest. "We are getting less midge damage to the point that it's not a factor at all in the grading – it is improving the grades," says Robert Stevenson, a pedigreed seed grower west of Brandon, who has grown midge tolerant wheat for the past three years. "The technology provides higher grain quality and there is less clean-out in the screenings for us."

#### **Reduced pesticide and fuel use**

Midge tolerant varieties also enable a significant drop in the use of insecticides, the traditional means of dealing with wheat midge. "I've had to spray in the past, but it isn't something that I even have to consider now," says Stevenson, who no longer scouts for wheat midge either. "You just don't have to worry about spraying, that's all there is to it. So it's one less thing to put into your budget."

While Stevenson's wallet benefits from not spraying, so does the environment – fewer insecticide applications also mean less diesel fuel usage.

#### **Midge pressure in 2011**

Stevenson cautions that although midge haven't been as prevalent in the province lately, growers shouldn't let their guard down. "We have not had high midge pressure in this area for the last few years," he says. "But midge are still affecting our susceptible varieties and they are seeing that damage at the elevator."

Ian Wise, a biologist at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Cereal Research Centre, confirms that there were no significant outbreaks in Manitoba in 2011. "The conditions were not optimal for the midge to thrive. In terms of how it will affect us in subsequent years, it's hard to say. But the reproductive capabilities of the midge allows them to increase their numbers very quickly under the right conditions," he warns.

"In most cases, when growers are seeding at the optimal time economically, that is also more suitable for the midge. Wheat is most vulnerable if seeded from about the start of the second week of May until the end of the month," says Wise. That's when there's a good chance that the emergence of the adult midge will coincide with wheat heading.

### **Strong agronomics**

Dale McLenehan owns a mixed farming operation near Lenore, Manitoba and has experienced midge-friendly conditions before. “We had midge problems a few years ago, so I switched over to midge tolerant wheat and ever since there hasn’t been that much damage around here,” he says. “I found it grew well for us and I haven’t switched back.”

McLenehan is ready for the next midge infestation to hit his wheat crop. “On a year when things go bad and there is lots of midge pressure, I am absolutely positive that this would be better than wheat without the midge tolerant gene – there is no doubt about that,” he says. “I plan on planting 450 acres of midge tolerant wheat again in 2012.”

In the meantime, McLenehan will continue to enjoy the other strong agronomic benefits of these varieties. “AC® Unity VB has really good standability and it provides more straw. The straw seems easier to bale behind our combine compared to some of the other varieties. We’ve also had really good yields.”

*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. Funding provided by the Canada and Manitoba governments through Growing Forward, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.*

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

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