



## NEWS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

## Midge Tolerant Wheat Exceeds Expectations

**MARCH 26, 2012** – A recent survey shows that Prairie farmers growing midge tolerant wheat in 2011 are pleased with the results and the program to preserve this new technology. Nearly 90% of growers said that midge tolerant wheat met or exceeded their expectations, with over 90% agreeing that the stewardship program is critical to protect the life of the midge tolerance gene.

The Midge Tolerant Wheat Stewardship Team sent the survey to over 2,600 farmers who purchased midge tolerant wheat in 2010 and 2011, and received an excellent response. “We collected over 1,100 responses,” says Todd Hyra, Stewardship Team member and SeCan Business Manager. “This return rate of over 40% indicates that growers are very engaged in this new technology and value its role in protecting their wheat yields and grade.”

Highlights from the survey include:

- 89.6% say that midge tolerant wheat met or exceeded their expectations for yield, quality and midge tolerance.
- 91.5% agree that it is critical to have a stewardship program in place to ensure that the effective life of the midge tolerance gene is protected.
- 95% are very familiar or at least somewhat familiar with the Midge Tolerant Wheat Stewardship Agreement.
- 87% agree that an interspersed refuge system prevents a build-up of the virulent (or resistant) midge population.
- 83.7% agree that in order to keep the refuge at the desired level of 10% of the plant population, it is necessary to limit the use of farm-saved seed to one generation past Certified seed.

“From this data it is clear that farmers growing midge tolerant wheat understand and respect the current stewardship system,” says Hyra. In the system, varieties containing the *Sm1* gene are blended with 10 percent midge susceptible varieties to form a varietal blend (VB) prior to seed sale. This creates an interspersed refuge to ensure that some non-virulent midge (i.e. those not resistant to the *Sm1* gene) survive, preventing a build-up of the resistant midge population. The Stewardship Agreement limits the use of farm-saved seed to one generation past Certified seed to keep the interspersed refuge system at the desired level.

“We are confident that by using the refuge, we can prolong the lifespan of this particular resistant gene to the point where it would provide effective efficacy against the wheat midge for many decades,” says Ian Wise, a biologist at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s Cereal Research Centre in Winnipeg.

The new 2012 provincial wheat midge forecasting maps show an increase in the range of midge occurrence in Alberta, and scattered pockets of severe pressure throughout Saskatchewan. To prevent midge damage and downgrading, farmers have access to a growing list of midge tolerant wheat varieties this spring, including AC® Unity VB, AC® Goodeve VB, AC® Fieldstar VB, AC® Shaw VB, CDC Utmost VB and AC® Conquer VB. Visit [www.midgetolerantwheat.ca](http://www.midgetolerantwheat.ca) for a link to the forecasting maps and a full list of seed varieties available.

*The Midge Tolerant Wheat Stewardship Team is a broad industry coalition representing plant breeders, government, seed growers, seed distributors and producer groups. The Stewardship Team is committed to maintaining the viability of midge tolerant wheat by educating western Canadian wheat producers on the importance of proper stewardship of the technology.*

-30-

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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