



## ARTICLE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Midge Tolerant Wheat Taking Root

**JUNE 17, 2010** – Early reports indicate that arrival of midge tolerant wheat has been greeted with enthusiasm by growers in areas that traditionally see high midge pressure. But experts are encouraging growers in “fringe” midge areas to take a strong look at the technology to assess the value it could provide for their operation.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada entomologist Ian Wise recommends that growers get to know new midge tolerant varieties, which are available for the first time this spring. “If you look at the overall package there are a lot of agronomic benefits that these varieties have over and above just simply midge tolerance. I think growers have to take that into account,” he says.

Wheat midge infestations can reduce crop yield and lower the market grade of harvested grain. For example, in 2006, Prairie growers lost approximately \$40 million due to midge damage, which caused both downgrading and yield reduction. For an average wheat grower, these losses can range from \$20 to \$75 per acre.

When it comes to evaluating the midge tolerant varieties, Wise says growers in high pressure areas can focus on the direct value of the midge tolerance, but growers in fringe areas need to focus on agronomic performance such as improved resistance for fusarium head blight, leaf rust and sprouting, which contribute to a yield advantage. Midge tolerance also reduces pressure on growers to monitor crops and make tough decisions on applying insecticides in the case of borderline midge pressure levels.

“One of the real benefits is that the wheat midge tolerance has been incorporated into new cultivars as opposed to old cultivars,” notes Wise. “A lot of these new lines have inherent agronomic benefits and now we’re attaching that tolerant technology.”

Saskatchewan provincial insect/pest management specialist Scott Hartley says it's important for growers to monitor their fields to determine the potential economic impacts of midge damage. “Under moderate midge pressure, monitoring becomes a lot more critical as to whether you have a problem or not. That might be one of the decisions that a producer brings into the equation – it can be economics as well as labour involved in having to go out and monitor on a regular basis when midge are emerging.”

Wise notes there is minimal additional cost associated with using the new midge tolerant varieties, and it compares well to the alternative of insecticide application. “Spraying can be challenging for growers, because it can be difficult to get the proper application timing,” he says.

Growers can find more information about registered varieties at [www.midgetolerantwheat.ca/farmers/seed-varieties.aspx](http://www.midgetolerantwheat.ca/farmers/seed-varieties.aspx). They can also get a closer look at the varieties by visiting provincial trial sites this summer or contacting distributors to determine locations and tour dates of demonstration sites.

*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.*

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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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