

# RED WHEAT NEWS

Spring 2009



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**W**heat can be a very profitable crop for Ontario producers, which makes disease protection to ensure top value even more important. Protecting from yield robbing diseases like rust, or grade robbing diseases like fusarium, is key and knowing the disease triangle can help you avoid many of them. "Growers should remember the disease triangle," says Luc Bourgeois of Bayer CropScience. "On the points of the triangle are the pathogen, the environment and the host, in this case, wheat."

Beginning with the environment, you can't do much to prevent too much rain or cool weather, but you can use agronomic practices that will help your wheat come out of the ground in a healthy manner. Design a rotation plan that will minimize disease pressure, suggests Bourgeois, then prepare the seed bed to ensure the best start possible. Placing the seed into the seed bed at the recommended depth, reducing compaction, and balancing fertility are all pieces of the disease reduction puzzle. Check the weather forecast in season and, if rain is in the forecast and leaf diseases, such as rust and septoria, are threatening, use fungicide to protect the crop.

The next angle of the disease triangle is to choose the best wheat variety for your area. It is also essential to plant vigorous, clean, and Certified seed. A healthy crop will be more tolerant to pathogens than a weak crop.

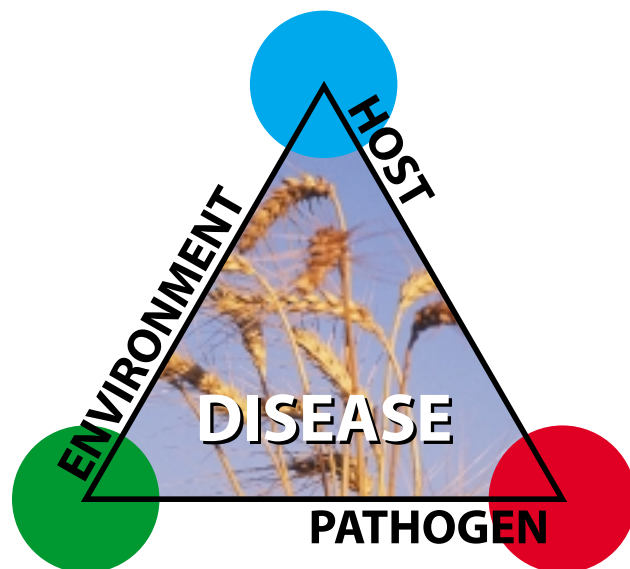
The final angle of the disease triangle is to know the pathogens that can affect the crop and how to keep them in check. The first threat comes at seeding with seed and soilborne pathogens that will cause seed rot and seedling blights, but also diseases that can affect grain quality and yield, such as bunts and smuts. Growing treated, Certified seed eliminates concern about disease on the seed.

According to Rob McLaughlin of C&M Seeds, treating seed is an important part of the disease control process. "When using a treatment it is necessary to not only have the best technology, but to ensure there is proper coverage on the seed." He says professionally treated seed can be a big part of any plan for success and using the most current technology is key because new products,

## Growing a Successful, Disease-Free Wheat Crop

*Understanding the disease triangle ensures protection of the growing plant*

### The Disease Triangle



such as Raxil MD, improve on earlier chemistry. He explains that Raxil MD offers superior coverage because of its 'micro dispersal' properties and it offers excellent soil and seed borne fusarium control. Once the plants have emerged, Bourgeois

says the crop is subjected to a variety of leaf diseases. Some of the diseases are always present and can rapidly spread with the right environmental conditions at any stage of the wheat crop. Powdery mildew, septoria and tan spot are three that will spread when

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*– Luc Bourgeois  
Bayer CropScience*

conditions are right. Other diseases are blown in from the south and tend to occur during grain filling stages. Any disease can have a serious impact on yield and yield quality; therefore, it is important to monitor the crop for signs of disease and ensure the wheat has protection against possible infection.

"Alternatively, use an early treatment of fungicide because it will result in a yield improvement," Bourgeois says. "Diseases build on the lower leaves over time, so applying a fungicide, like Stratego, prevents the pathogen from gaining momentum and affecting the crop at its most vulnerable stage of grain filling." "Early spraying will benefit yield and increase bushel weight," adds McLaughlin. "With that in mind, can you afford not to spray?"

The next critical period in the plant's development is heading. "The most important application is at heading because it will protect yield by keeping the flag leaf healthy from leaf diseases, and will protect the quality of the grain against fusarium," Bourgeois explains. He says his company's new product, Prosaro, will be tested in field scale trials in 2009 and early research shows it works against fusarium and all foliar diseases.

McLaughlin says the final step in success, after choosing a high performing variety, treating it with the latest technology, protecting it with fungicides at emergence and heading, is harvesting at the optimum time. The best time to harvest is at the first dry down, you will avoid mildew issues and other harvest problems like sprouting.

It may seem like a lot to consider when aiming to achieve a top quality wheat crop, but the right tools remove the guesswork and make the process much easier. Understanding the interconnection of the angles of the disease triangle will ultimately take much of the guesswork out of wheat production, leaving only the weather to chance. ○



## The Countdown Has Begun.

*New Hard Red & Soft Red Winter Wheat Varieties Coming for Fall 2009.*

**Call 1-888-733-9432 to find out more.**

# Wheat Prices Grow

## *Fantastic outlook for Hard Red Spring Wheat*

Spring wheat growers should be excited. In February 2008, world wheat prices peaked at record levels pushed up by record tight international stocks. Growers responded by planting record acres of wheat, most of which was low protein types of wheat such as soft red winter. Hard red spring wheat, utilized for bread production, remains in relative short supply.

"There are still strong premiums to be had for growers producing hard red spring wheat," says Palmerston Grain Merchandising Manager Dana Omland. "It's likely this will continue into next year's crop as well." He suggests that prices for hard red wheat will stay strong with growers reaping record premiums, over soft red winter.

"If there is a general commodity shortage again," Omland continues, "the highest quality spring wheat will rally the most in price. Our best customers want our high quality spring wheat and have steadily increased usage, so I strongly encourage growers to consider planting hard red spring wheat".

"It's a great time to grow spring wheat," concludes Omland. "Despite the crash in many commodity markets, spring wheat prices have stayed strong. Current On-Farm prices in Southwestern Ontario are well over \$300.00/mt, nearly double the price for soft red winter!"



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*- Dana Omland Palmerston Grain Merchandising Manager*

## **100% Ontario Pasta**

*Durum wheat looks profitable now and in the future!*

After achieving Ontario class status in 2008, durum wheat is poised to take off as the next best crop in 2009. As growers become comfortable with the production needed to grow durum successfully, the crop is almost large enough that pasta packages may soon advertise "Made with 100% Ontario Durum"!

"I believe durum is a worthwhile crop to grow and will contribute more to the bottom line than HRS, if the price spread stays strong," says Mervyn Erb of Erb Crop Management Systems Inc. in Brucefield. "For 2009, it appears spring durum will be more profitable than hard red spring wheat and, possibly, more than even winter wheat."

For Jeff Howson, of Howson Mills in Blyth this is welcomed news. "I am looking forward to tremendous growth in acreage in the near future" he says. "Initially we thought the Ontario crop would be a blend crop with western production, but we have revised our expectations upward" He continues. "We do see an opportunity for this product to be a stand alone product... competing face to face with Western Canada Amber Durum".



*Steve Twynstras yield monitor touches 90 bu/acre in parts of his Hallmark field*

Steven Twynstra of Ailsa Craig has been growing durum for about five years and he says it has been a good fit for his business. "Our yields have been in the mid-to high-60s and, with input costs, it has been a competitive income to our other cash crops." He says the recognition of Ontario durum on labels will be an asset as consumers move towards purchases that are grown locally. Plus, local production from start to finish reduces the drain on fossil fuels, he adds.

"The acreage potential for Hallmark Durum in Ontario is huge," says John McLaughlin of C&M Seeds. "Growers have always looked for 'value chain' participation in their crops and durum offers a clear opportunity to meet that goal."

There are many benefits to growing durum including the availability of another crop for the rotation, adds Twynstra. "Durum offers a break from oilseeds."

One caution from Erb, however, is that success is greater in durum production if it is not planted into corn or wheat ground due to disease risk.

Nevertheless, it is hard to put a damper on such a good news story for Ontario growers.

## **Wheat Industry Newsmaker**

*C&M Seeds Recognizes David Hooker*



Field Crop Agronomist and college professor, Dr. David Hooker is also a farmer. The University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus researcher and innovator says all his agricultural roles fuel each other and drive him to seek more knowledge that will, ultimately, help Ontario growers. He feels his hands-on farming experience gives him added credibility when he meets other growers but his farm also serves as his personal laboratory.

"I enjoy science and getting into the factors of why crops respond the way they do to technology," Dr. Hooker admits. But, the 850 acre Belmont farm he operates with his father also provides him with the questions and inspiration for his research projects.

"The farm helps to fuel my drive for knowledge and the research helps Ontario farmers and the industry," Dr. Hooker explains. He left the farm after high school to get a diploma in agriculture from Ridgetown College and that education spurred him on to University of Guelph for more education culminating in a doctorate in Crop Science in 2000. "I kept going to feed my quest for knowledge."

Now, Dr. Hooker is putting that knowledge to work developing 'Greenseeker', a promising tool that may guide growers to improve on nitrogen management for winter wheat. He is modeling Greenseeker after similar work at the University of Guelph for corn.

"I like to help Ontario farmers gain profitability and increase crop yield and this current project excites me," says this enthusiastic researcher who credits a team of associates, including OMAFRA's Peter Johnson, for supporting his ideas and helping him find the answers to many questions.

What Dr. Hooker has learned on his farm and in the classroom, he anxiously shares with students and growers who are just as eager for knowledge.



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