



NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

New Midge Tolerant Wheat Website

SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN, August 31, 2009 - The Midge Tolerant Wheat Stewardship Team recently launched www.midgetolerantwheat.ca. “The site is a great resource for farmers, seed growers and industry to learn more about the benefits, new varieties and stewardship program to help preserve this valuable trait for the future,” says Mike Espeseth, Communications Manager for the Western Grains Research Foundation.

Three new midge tolerant wheat varieties will be commercially available starting in the spring of 2010 – AC[®] Unity VB from SeCan, AC[®] Goodeve VB from Alliance Seed Corporation and an extra strong variety, AC[®] Glencross VB, from Faurshou Farms. All varieties will be sold as a varietal blend (VB) which contains 90% midge tolerant variety and 10% midge susceptible variety (refuge). These new varieties can prevent an estimated \$36 per acre loss from midge damage downgrading and yield reductions.

“Farmers helped fund the research with their check-off dollars,” explains Espeseth, noting that the varieties were developed by AAFC wheat breeders in Winnipeg and Swift Current using funds from AAFC, the WGRF check-off program and variety distributors.

Midge tolerance is based on a single gene, which can become ineffective over a relatively short period of time as insect populations change. “The website helps illustrate how the interspersed refuge system works to prevent the build up of virulent (resistant) midge, extending the life of midge tolerance from as little as 10 years to 90 years or longer,” says Espeseth.

Farmers interested in planting a midge tolerant wheat variety will be required to sign a Midge Tolerant Wheat Stewardship Agreement that limits farm-saved seed to one generation past Certified seed. This limitation is critical to ensure that the refuge remains at the desired level of 10% of the plant population, as the refuge in farm-saved seed may change substantially over multiple generations. For example, under an extremely heavy midge infestation, the susceptible refuge variety could sustain up to 50% yield loss.

“Understanding the science behind midge tolerance is very important to the entire industry,” explains Espeseth. “With this knowledge, it is clear that the stewardship agreement is a simple, effective way to help preserve this exciting technology for decades to come.”

The Midge Tolerant Wheat Stewardship Team is a broad industry coalition representing plant breeders, government, seed growers, seed distributors and producer groups. The 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.

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

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