



Planting Management Tips for Winter Wheat

By Robert Moloney, CCA-ON

If you're planting winter wheat this fall, do some planning now. Any management you do this year will play a large role in determining how good your yield will be next fall.

Rotation is important

Maintaining a good rotation is one of the keys to maximizing yields with any crop. With winter wheat, there are a number of significant disease considerations. The most obvious is the increased potential for fusarium if you plant into corn stubble or back into cereal stubble. If weather conditions at flowering aren't conducive to infection this won't matter, but if you have the wrong conditions you may end up with wheat that doesn't even make feed grade. Another disease that showed up this year was Take-all. This is a root rot that survives on grassy species and can infect wheat. It will typically show up in fields with a short rotation of cereals or where there has been a grassy sod for many years.

Start with a clean field

If you are planting the field no-till make sure you do a burndown. Once the wheat has emerged, the options for control become very limited. Use a glyphosate product for your burndown. Research from Ridgetown College has found that including a hormonal herbicide (such as 2, 4-D) pre-plant can reduce wheat yields. Once the wheat has emerged, Refine Extra, Pardner and Buctril M are the only products registered for use in the fall. Make sure you kill the weeds when they are still small. Using any hormonal herbicides on emerged wheat in the fall will have a big yield impact even though there will likely be no obvious injury

symptoms after application.

Plant at the right time

This year has proven once again how critical getting wheat in at the appropriate time is to achieve maximum yields. Seeding too early may leave the crop more open to Barley Yellow Dwarf virus transmission from volunteer cereals and Hessian Fly infection. Planting too late can lead to more heaving and winterkill, especially if we have a cold, wet fall. Check the OMAFRA Agronomy Guide (Pub. 811) for the optimum timing in your part of the province.

Seed treatment is important

Plant only wheat seed on which a fungicide seed treatment has been applied. Not only will this give the wheat the best chance of getting off to a good start this fall and overwintering well, for some diseases this is the only control available. In areas with Dwarf Bunt, properly treating the seed with Dividend XL RTA is the only control we have. If not controlled before it infects the wheat, bunt will require considerable extra management at harvest and may leave you with an un-saleable crop. The key to good control is to make sure the treatment is applied properly to all seeds and at the appropriate rate.

Seeding rate can save money

It can be difficult to get drills adjusted to provide the exact seeding rate that you want, but it is

worth trying anyway. Check the tags/end of bag of the seed you have purchased and plant based on the seeds per lb or Kg indicated. If planting early in ideal conditions you can probably aim for 1.4-1.6 million seeds per acre. If you are planting late or under tough conditions you may want to bump this to 1.8 million seeds per acre. You might also want to drop the seeding rate if you are planting into conditions where you expect lodging.

Starter fertilizer will usually pay

Cereals are probably the most likely spot to get an economic response from starter fertilizer. A high phosphorus starter will often give response even on high P soil test fields. Liquid and dry fertilizer starters will work equally effectively. Starter becomes even more important with late planted fields or if the weather conditions are cool and wet.

Check your planting depth

There were a number of fields last year that heaved primarily due to shallow planting depth. Wheat should be planted a minimum of 1" deep. Last fall, wheat that was planted no-till into soybean stubble didn't always make it in this deep. The dry, hard soil conditions made getting wheat in to proper depth a real challenge in some fields and reduced spring populations in those fields considerably.



Robert Moloney is a Certified Crop Adviser employed as an Agronomist with Inland Co-op, Mitchell.

There are over 500 Certified Crop Advisers (CCA) in Ontario. Each CCA has demonstrated their knowledge about Ontario crop production by passing the required exams. In addition, they have the crop advisory experience, the education, the commitment to continuing education and have signed a comprehensive code of ethics, which places the grower's interests first.

This industry driven program helps ensure that Ontario crop producers are well served by those providing their crop production advice. This article was written by one of those CCA's.