

Blacklands IPM Newsletter

Wheat Pre-Plant Bulletin

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Status

Producers are not terribly excited about planting wheat this year. With prices so low, most will only plant wheat to be grazed, or to keep the benefits of their established rotations. For the 2016-2017 wheat crop, goals will be to keep rock-bottom input costs, as currently it's difficult to make a profit pencil out.

News

[Fertilizer prices](#) continue to drop and may fall even lower this winter

EPA pulled the conditional registration of [Belt insecticide](#) (flubendiamide), produced by Bayer.

A new composite study from farms all around the world shows that [no-till systems enhance microbial biomass](#) and enzyme activity in the soil. There were also demonstrated differences in the type of tillage implements.

[Screwworms](#) (previously eradicated in the US) have been found on deer in Florida. Eradication efforts are already in place.

Cost-Cutting Tips

You can cut costs on wheat production in many ways. These tips won't help you achieve top yields, rather the objective in times of low prices should be to make *acceptable* yields while reducing costs as much as possible.

Variety Selection

Start with a variety that has good resistance to disease and insect pressure. AgriLife Extension's ["Picks List"](#) is a great place to start your research. It combines years of data from state-wide trials to compare the most successful cultivars on the market, and has Blacklands-specific lists for both hard and soft red wheat. You can see all of the data in the [2016 Wheat Variety Trial Results](#) publication.

Planting Rates

Clark Neely, AgriLife Extension Small Grains Specialist, suggests cutting back on seeding rates when planting for grain production. Trials in the Blacklands (pictured below) show that seeding rates of 30 lbs/acre of WB Cedar yield similarly to both 50 and 90 lbs/acre rates.

2016 Uniform Wheat Variety Trial: HRWW, Blacklands Regional Summary

Rank	Variety	Source	Yield (bu/a)			Test Wt (lb/bu) 2016
			AVG	Hillsboro	McGregor	
1	Billings	OSU	61.8	68.7	54.9	57.8
2	WB Cedar @ 50 lb/a	Monsanto	56.1	62.7	49.5	55.6
3	WB Cedar @ 90 lb/a	Monsanto	55.8	58.7	52.9	56.6
4	WB 4458	Monsanto	55.2	53.1	57.3	57.0
5	Gallagher	OSU	54.9	57.9	51.9	58.3
6	TAM 304/305 Blend	TAMU	53.9	57.1	50.6	56.2
7	WB 4303 (HV9W10-1002)	Monsanto	53.2	56.9	49.4	53.8
8	WB Cedar @ 30 lb/a	Monsanto	53.0	58.0	47.9	56.0

Partial chart from the 2016 Wheat Variety Trial Results publication.

Soil Sampling

Having your soil's nutrient profile evaluated still pays off: credit the nutrients already in your soils and save on fertilizer costs. If you've never done a soil test before, or need a refresher course, this handy [Testing Your Soil](#) publication details all the steps. And if you conduct regular sampling, these up-to-date [tips on improving your methods](#) can really help. A recent [trial](#) in Hill County demonstrated that nitrogen can be credited up to 24" without a loss in yield. Timing and application methods are important to consider in order to get the most out of your fertilizer. Calvin Trostle, Extension agronomist, wrote a guide clearing up some misconceptions about the [importance of timing in topdressing](#). He suggests applying N just before jointing for the best yield results.

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Cost-Cutting Tips

In-Furrow Phosphate

On the subject of soils, deep banding your P (if you need it) allows you to cut your rate in half while maintaining the same yield in both grain and forage. Of course, all fertilizer efficacy depends on several factors, including timing. You can read more in this [publication](#).

Scout

Don't apply pesticides if they aren't needed. Scout your fields to determine the levels of insect, weed, and disease pressure. Foliar fungicides can protect yield losses from rusts and mildew, but are not profitable in disease-free fields. Forecasts for 2017 indicate milder and drier weather than normal. Consider that each fungal disease has different ideal conditions for development.



Use economic thresholds that are tailored to the Blacklands if you do decide to treat pest problems. (Pictured above: leaf rust, bird-cherry oat aphids, and pigweeds.)

Fields should be monitored closely, and any pesticide applications should be evaluated afterwards for efficacy.

This [guide](#) can help if you're trying to determine the value of seed treatments.

Other Resources

There is a copious amount of information on wheat production practices on A&M's [Variety Testing website](#). Contact your local Extension agents if you have any questions.

The [USDA Wheat Outlook](#) is published monthly and can help you stay on top of prices, production, and the international situation.

The [Weed Control Recommendations in Wheat](#) publication has been updated this year.

Bug of the Week

The walnut sphinx caterpillar feeds on alder, hickory, walnut, and other tree species. Adults do not feed. Just like other sphinx moth caterpillars (often called 'hornworms'), the spikey structure on their rear is not sharp or rigid, and does not contain venom.

When disturbed, the caterpillar will thrash around and emit a high-pitched squeaking sound by pushing air out of the breathing holes on their sides to startle would-be predators.



Picture of adult by Forrest Mitchell

