

IT'S TIME TO PLANT WHEAT

Know how. Know **now**.

If you have decided to plant some wheat this fall, there are several recommended practices that should be done to improve your chances of success. It is important to plant quality disease-free wheat seed. Select a variety that has performed well in the region over several years and has good disease resistance. The importance of knowing these characteristics is important as disease pressure has been heavy in southeast Nebraska in recent years. The past few years some of the diseases we have had problems with include: scab, Wheat Streak Mosaic, Soil Borne Mosaic, Tan Spot, Barley Yellow Dwarf, Powdery Mildew, Septoria Leaf Blotch and leaf rust. If you had scab or are concerned about it for next year there are some management practices recommended. Again plant certified fungicide-treated seed. Avoid planting wheat in corn residue. The scab fungus causes stalk rots in corn and survives best on corn stubble. Avoid planting wheat cultivars that are highly susceptible. Next spring consider applying a fungicide at the beginning of flowering if weather conditions favor the development of scab.

Wheat Streak Mosaic and Soil Borne Mosaic are viruses, so foliar treatment with a fungicide is ineffective, but management strategies can help reduce the incidence of many diseases. The incidence of Wheat Streak Mosaic can be reduced by controlling volunteer wheat prior to fall planting. This disease is spread into newly planted wheat by the wheat curl mite moving over from volunteer wheat in the field or an adjacent wheat stubble field. It would be advised to destroy volunteer wheat two weeks before fall planting. We need a two week dead period of no wheat so the wheat curl mite will not spread the Wheat Streak Mosaic to the new planting. The ideal time to plant wheat for southeastern Nebraska is from around October 1st for maximum yield. The Hessian fly free dates for Nemaha County are September 29-30 and September 30 - October 1 for Richardson County.

It is important to manage wheat as you would manage corn or soybeans. Wheat is a good crop in a rotation because it can help in weed control, especially if you are having glyphosate resistant weed issues or need conservation work completed on land. Wheat stubble can also be double-cropped following harvest with soybeans, sunflowers or a cover crop for grazing. Advances in wheat breeding and disease resistance have improved the yield potential of wheat to 100 bushels per acre or more. Under good growing conditions and intensive management we can expect wheat yields 75 – 90 bushels per acre or higher. Wheat will respond to fertility and also intensive management. Under irrigation the recommended seeding rate is 120 pounds per acre, with 90 pounds per acre the most common seeding rate for dryland. Some growers under dryland conditions have been experimenting planting at higher rates (100 pounds per acre) and have had good success.

Wheat should be planted in a firm weed-free seedbed. No-tilling wheat works very well, especially after soybeans. It is critical to control weeds so wheat can get off to a good start with little competition. Fertility is also important in wheat production. A



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producer told me wheat yields were 15 bu/ac higher in a field where he applied phosphorus compared to where no phosphorus was applied. While all soils may not need phosphorus, it is important to soil test and determine fertility requirements for your wheat crop. A fall application of nitrogen is also beneficial in getting wheat off to a good start. If soils are deficient in nutrients such as phosphorus, wheat will respond positively to applications. Sandy soils are many times low in potassium, and crops will respond to applications. By following some of these guidelines you have the potential for a good wheat crop. Some of the varieties that have performed well in recent years include: Wolf, Everest, Freeman, Overland, and Wesley. There are several other varieties that have also performed well in southeast Nebraska. Information about the UNL Wheat Variety Tests can be found on-line at <http://varietytest.unl.edu/winterwheat.html>. If you have other questions concerning wheat production feel free to contact our office at (402) 274-4755.

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