

NEWSWHEAT

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Nebraska Wheat Growers Association

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Past President's Report

The past year has been challenging, exciting, and rewarding. I would like to thank my fellow board members of the Nebraska Wheat Growers Association and staff for a successful year. I would also like to thank the members of the Nebraska Wheat Board and staff for making this possible.

January began with a trip to Portland, OR to visit the Wheat Marketing Center. The group participated in the Wheat Export and Marketing Workshop which was very enlightening and eye opening. I believe this event should be attended by every wheat producer or anyone associated with the wheat industry. Within the month we also hosted the Annual Meeting of the Nebraska Wheat Growers Association (NWGA) and had members attend the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) Winter Conference in Washington D.C. During the NAWG Winter Meeting, we take time to visit our Senators and Congressmen on Capitol Hill.

In February we joined with the Nebraska Wheat Board to host the annual "Bake & Take" event around Lincoln, NE. We took cinnamon rolls to our state senators, staff, and stakeholders to show our appreciation for the work they do on behalf of Nebraska wheat growers. At the end of the month we had members attend Commodity Classic to partake in committee and board meetings as well as attend educational sessions and the trade show.

As March rolled around, board members attended the Governor's Ag Conference in Kearney, NE. Producers have the opportunity to hear from the Governor, discuss important issues, and enjoy the refreshing wheat beer that we provide in the evening.

April through July we remained busy hosting trade teams from various countries. During this time we highlight farms in the state, have them meet with key representatives within the industry, and talk about potential market opportunities. We also continually host booths and present at events such as Nebraska State FFA Convention.

In August our association and staff helped with the Member's Wheat Seed Days as well as participated in our annual golf tournament held in conjunction with the Chase County Fair. September brought another Husker Harvest Days where we enjoyed visiting with consumers and producers from Nebraska and visiting states. This fall we have begun working on our objectives for the upcoming legislative session. We remain active in the Ag Leaders Working Group with our main focus being property tax relief.

Both your dues to the Nebraska Wheat Growers and the checkoff to the Nebraska Wheat Board are doing good things for the wheat growers. We have had many accomplishments this year on both the state and national level from conservation programs to expanding areas of trade.

This past year our association made the decision to sell the Mobile Baking Lab and pick-up. It was a good tool for us the last ten years, but all good things must come to an end. We are now looking for a new adventure! If you have any ideas, please direct them to any board member or staff.

In November we also welcomed Sarah Morton to serve as the new Executive Secretary for the Nebraska Wheat Growers Association. We are very excited to have her on board.

It has been a great experience serving as your President for the Nebraska Wheat Growers Association. Thank you for a great year and I wish everyone a safe and successful 2020.

Mark R Spurgin

NWGA holds 2019 Annual Meeting

The Nebraska Wheat Growers Association held their 2019 Annual Meeting on Monday, January 27, 2020 at the West Central Research and Extension Center in North Platte, NE. The meeting had a full agenda including board reports, an update from the National Association of Wheat Growers and one from the West Central Research and Extension Center, presenting the Outstanding Achievement of the Year Award and recognizing the Wheat Yield Contest winners, and updating NWGA's resolutions.

Randy Peters was recognized with 2019's Outstanding Achievement Award. Randy has been farming since 1973 on his farm in southeast Nebraska. Throughout his career, he has served on various boards and committees and represented the wheat industry on both the state and national level. Along with raising wheat and wheat seed, Randy also raises corn, soybeans, certified pea seed, and sunflowers as well as runs a black angus cow-calf operation. Randy has dedicated much of his time over the years to promoting the wheat industry and educating consumers. This year the Nebraska Wheat Growers Association recognized Randy for all the contributions he has made to the industry.



Above: Mark Spurgin presents Randy Peters with the 2019 Outstanding Achievement Award



Above: Brent Robertson of Elsie, NE is recognized for his achievements in the 2019 National Wheat Yield Contest

The National Wheat Foundation hosted its second year of the Wheat Yield Contest. This year Nebraska had two national placing competitors and five growers that were recognized for their 1st place awards on the state level. The results were as follows:

Travis Freeburg: % Increase Winter Wheat Dryland

- 1st Place Nebraska
- 2nd Place Nationally
- 125.04 bushels / acre; 372.87% increase

Ed Evertson: High Yield Winter Wheat Dryland

- 1st Place Nebraska
- 5th Place Nationally
- 146.77 bushels / acre

Brian Palm: High Yield Winter Wheat Irrigated

- 1st Place Nebraska
- 140.90 bushels / acre

Brock Terrell: % Increase Winter Wheat Irrigated

- 1st Place Nebraska
- 117.18 bushels / acre; 208.38% increase

Brent Robertson: High Yield Spring Wheat Dryland

- 1st Place Nebraska
- 72.64 bushels / acre



At left: Struhiuja Stepanovic with the West Central Research and Extension Center updated attendees on wheat trial research and results.

2019 Updated Resolutions

Each year, the Nebraska Wheat Growers Association reviews and updates their resolutions. At the Annual Meeting held in January, members of the association discussed and voted to retain 11 resolutions. Below are the 11 updated January 2020 versions.

State Affairs

I-B-2
NWGA opposes a tonnage or check off tax on fertilizer, chemicals or herbicides levied on producers.

Domestic Policy

III-A-13
NWGA supports the exemption of youth employment for agriculture in future labor laws.

III-B-10
NWGA recognizes possible efforts to repeal local county government and school tax levy caps put in place by the legislature. NWGA supports a reduction in the level of all current tax levies and opposes the repeal of current caps.

III-B-15
NWGA supports any state or federal incentives to help bring young/new producers back to production agriculture.

III-B-16
NWGA supports the permanent extension of section 179 tax at the current level of \$1,000,000 , indexed for inflation from the time of passage, and the extension of bonus depreciation at the level of 100%.

Environmental

IV-C-13
NWGA opposes any changes to current regulation of dust particulate matter related to agriculture.

Research

V-A-1
NWGA fully supports the continuation of Invasive and Chemical Resistant Weeds of Wheat research, at current or higher levels of funding.

V-A-8
NWGA welcomes private investments to enhance wheat research.

Marketing

VI-A-5
NWGA strongly opposes mergers of large agri-businesses that limit competition.

VI-A-6
NWGA supports future developments of incentive programs to produce Identity Preserved (IP) wheat in Nebraska.

VI-B-3
NWGA will support any mechanism that will expand wheat trade without sacrificing current farm programs.



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Finding the Wheat in the Trade Chaff

By Dalton Henry, Vice President of Policy, U.S. Wheat Associates

Anyone in agriculture following trade policy under the current administration should by now be getting pretty good at picking out kernels of good news from the chaff of the bad. Fortunately, when you take a step back today, there is a significant harvest of trade policy wins that certainly deserve recognition. So, let's spend some time looking for those kernels of good news.

U.S., Mexico, Canada Agreement (USMCA). As of late January, the agreement had not yet been ratified in Canada, and necessary changes in domestic regulations across all three countries were needed, but final implementation of USMCA (the new NAFTA) was looking more and more like a formality. We are past the bold threats of withdrawal from NAFTA, with a new agreement that protects duty-free access to the huge Mexican wheat market, modernizes sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) provisions and removes the largest remaining barrier (eligibility for grades) for U.S. producers (mainly along the border) who want to sell wheat to Canadian elevators.

China. U.S. hard red winter (HRW) producers understand the “chaff” here all too well. When the United States piled Section 301 tariffs on China over intellectual property and state subsidy concerns, China retaliated with tariffs on U.S. agricultural goods, bringing what had been an annual 1.6 million metric ton market for U.S. wheat to nearly nothing. U.S. growers saw the first light at the end of the tunnel this January, though, with the signing of the “Phase One” agreement. While much of the news coverage of the agreement has been rightfully focused on purchase commitments made by China to buy more agricultural commodities, the agreement did contain substantial new provisions on how China imports wheat under their tariff rate quotas (TRQs). The agreement contains eight new commitments that build on the recently improved rules China issues as a result of the United States’ winning WTO dispute case that China had not administered its reduced duty TRQ in a way that was predictable, fair or transparent.

The new rules now include an explicit goal of TRQ utilization, will allow for additional state-owned organizations to apply for quota wheat and provide for non-discrimination between state trading entities such as COFCO, and non-state entities like private flour millers. The devil will be in the details. Yet the size of China's wheat market, combined with strong demand for U.S. wheat, should provide strong incentive for the TRQ to function. What is the bottom-line impact to the “good” column? If the TRQ fills, China becomes the world's third largest wheat importer at 9.6 million metric tons and a likely top market for U.S. wheat.

Japan. Japan is second largest customer of U.S. wheat in the world, and uses U.S. HRW, hard red spring (HRS) and soft white (SW) for about 50 percent of its supplies each year. The “chaff” threat to that market arrived with the new multilateral CPTPP agreement that did not include the United States. It gave Canadian and Australian producers an effective tariff advantage over U.S. wheat worth about \$20 per MT (or about \$0.55 per bushel) in 2019. Our disadvantage was set to grow to \$30 per MT in 2020, and each year after and force Japan to significantly cut its U.S. wheat imports. Fortunately, the United States concluded a mini-agreement with Japan that took effect Jan. 1, 2020, that, to the credit of U.S. and Japanese negotiators, was concluded in near record time. It puts us back on equal footing with Canadian and Australian wheat and will preserve one of our most important wheat markets.

Brazil. Brazil is the world's fourth largest wheat importer. However, U.S. farmers have had only limited opportunities to market their wheat there because a regional trade agreement gives a tariff advantage to other South American countries. That is changing based on an agreement struck between President Trump and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro last spring. That agreement stipulated that Brazil would implement a long-overdue TRQ allowing an additional 750,000 MT of wheat to be imported duty-free from countries that are not part of the regional trade agreement. Brazil can use U.S. winter wheat and freight rates from U.S. Gulf ports to Brazil's northeast region are competitive. That positions U.S. wheat well to capture the bulk of the new allocation, giving us a significant new foothold in a major wheat importer.

Continued from previous page

Aggressive trade enforcement and vigilant attention to other market access issues will continue to be very important for all U.S. wheat farmers. U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) can assure you that our organization is actively engaged in these efforts. For example, the on-going U.S. dispute with the EU over aircraft production subsidies has the potential to result in retaliation against Italy and the United Kingdom's HRS imports. China must be closely monitored for compliance with the Phase One agreement, and India's always-increasing wheat subsidies have them on the verge of being an exporter of heavily subsidized wheat. USW will continue working with our state wheat commissions, grower organizations and government negotiators to keep the U.S. wheat store open.

Even with all of that on the horizon, perhaps we can rest just a little easier, knowing that in just the last six months, we've seen major developments in three of the largest markets for U.S. wheat producers – all of which add substantially to the “good” kernels of world wheat trade.

Advances in Understanding the Management of the Wheat Stem Sawfly

Bethany Thomas - Entomology Graduate Research Assistant
Jeff Bradshaw - Extension Entomologist

Cultural control and conservation help manage the wheat stem sawfly.

The wheat stem sawfly (WSS) has been a major pest of spring wheat in the upper Great Plains throughout much of the 20th century. However, during the latter part of the century, the WSS adapted an earlier emergence period enabling it to infest winter wheat. Over the past few decades, WSS populations have greatly increased and expanded in the Nebraska Panhandle, becoming the most economically significant pest of wheat.

The WSS life cycle begins with adults emerging late-May until mid-June, as adults break diapause and leave the overwintered grass stubbles. Female sawflies then oviposit WSS eggs inside large, hollow stemmed grasses, where the sawfly larvae hatch and subsequently feed on the inside of the host grass stem for about a month. This feeding stress on the host plant can cause a reduction in grain weight and kernel number, resulting in correlated grain yield losses up to 35%. Once the host plant begins to desiccate, the WSS larva stops feeding and crawls to the base of the stem for hibernation, cutting a v-shaped notch in the stem which may cause the grass to lodge.

Chemical pest management with contact insecticides have been shown to be ineffective with WSS control. Alternative planting strategies using solid-stem wheat cultivars have been successful in decreasing WSS larval survivorship, but the seeds are typically more expensive with lower yield returns. Crop rotation has had limited success, partially due to the fact wheat, barley, and rye are simply not being planted. Currently in Nebraska, cultural and conservation control are the two most effective methods of controlling the WSS.

Cultural Control Through Tillage

In dryland wheat, no-till practices can have significant benefits for soil health by reducing soil erosion, soil compaction, moisture loss, and nutrient loss. In western Nebraska, no-till practices became widely used during the mid-2000's drought. While no-till in wheat may help increase yields from the greater soil health, unfortunately keeping the soil intact may have helped conserve WSS larva overwintering in wheat stubble.

Our on-farm research from 2016-2018 in Box Butte and Cheyenne counties compared three tillage treatments in the spring on winter wheat fallow previously known to be highly infested by the WSS. The treatments employed were no-till, one pass with a tandem disk, and two passes with a tandem disk. Our results showed a significant decrease in WSS survival with a single pass (approximately 80% mortality) and decrease of WSS survival with a second pass (approximately 95% mortality). Sawfly mortality may be due to simply turning sawfly-infested dirt clods “upside-down,” confusing the emerging WSS adults to which direction is “up” during their emergence from the stubble.

Parasitoid Host Grass Conservation

In addition to employing management strategies within the wheat field itself, selectively planting and/or maintaining specific grasses in the surrounding landscape may also assist in WSS control. Present-day sawfly populations in Nebraska still retain their ability to infest both native and nonnative large stemmed, hollow grasses, but with much lower survivability. Wheat cultivars have been selectively bred to have little height and width variation between tillers. However, non-cultivated grasses still retain much of their original genetic variability, where stem size is highly influenced by environmental factors such as temperature, precipitation, and soil quality.

An extensive landscape survey across the Nebraska Panhandle and Sandhills has identified multiple grasses which may work as effective trap crops for the WSS. Host grass preference from most to least is as follows: smooth brome, western wheatgrass, intermediate wheatgrass, and crested wheatgrass (Table 1). However, high infestation does not necessarily equate to high WSS survival. In each of the grasses, a small percentage of sawflies successfully complete their life cycle (Table 1). Alternatively, we have found these four grasses to be adequate hosts for the WSS's natural enemies, two braconid parasitoid wasps: *Bracon cephi* and *Bracon lissogaster*. The conservation of these four non-cultivated grasses may create a situation ideal for trapping sawfly larva within the stem while promoting parasitoid population growth.

| Host grass | Average WSS infestation % | Average WSS survival % | Average parasitoid survival % |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Smooth brome | 42.2 | 4.1 | 6.0 |
| Western wheatgrass | 24.2 | 3.6 | 4.2 |
| Intermediate wheatgrass | 23.3 | 0.8 | 3.4 |
| Crested wheatgrass | 6 | 0 | 1.5 |

Table 1: 2019 summer landscape survey results for all 16 sample locations, averaged. Average WSS infestation % identified through the presence of a WSS larva or sawdust-like frass (indicative of the WSS). Average WSS survival % identified through identification of live WSS larva. Average parasitoid survival % identified through the presence of a parasitoid cocoon.

In the parasitoids life cycle, females locate WSS larva living within a stem, stick their ovipositor inside, and paralyze the WSS larva. Then they insert their own egg(s) into the stem to feed upon the WSS larva. The parasitoid may then complete development and form a silken cocoon within the stem, either undergoing a second emergence period later in the summer or overwintering inside the stem to emerge the following summer. Within the landscape survey, we were able to locate this unique relationship between the non-cultivated grasses, WSS, and parasitoid wasps in rangeland, tree-row windbreaks, ditched, CRP ground, and unfarmable areas surrounding power poles (Figure 1).

In order to increase the likelihood of successful parasitoid conservation, growers may consider planting and/or not disturbing smooth brome and wheatgrasses surrounding wheat fields. While the parasitoids were first identified in 2015 at a single location in Box Butte county, the 2019 summer landscape survey found the parasitoids in all 16 wheat fields sampled (Figure 2). These are great results for growers in Nebraska affected by the presence of the WSS.



Figure 1: Western wheatgrass infested with parasitoid wasps growing in a ditch near Kimball, NE.

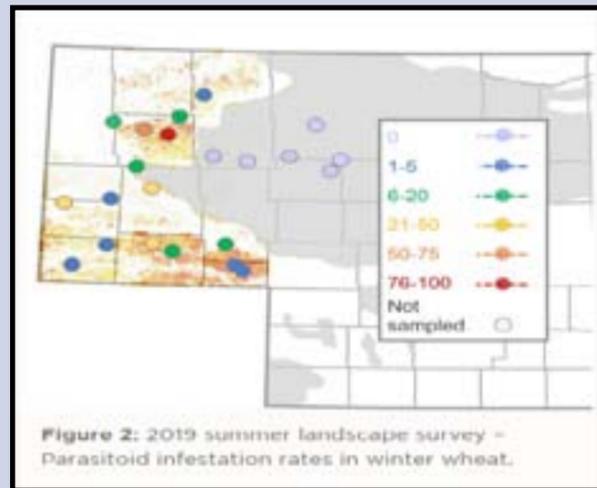


Figure 2: 2019 summer landscape survey - Parasitoid infestation rates in winter wheat.



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Thank you for your commitment to the Nebraska Wheat Growers Association! NWGA succeeds when the voices of its members can be shared. Your voice can be heard in the form of a simple letter or phone call to a legislator, representing NWGA at a meeting, sharing your opinion on an issue, or serving on an NWGA committee. Thank you for making sure the voice of Nebraska Wheat is heard.

Please check below the issue area(s) you would be interested in assisting NWGA in or receiving extra information about. Thank you!

- State Affairs
- International/Trade Policy
- Membership
- Research/Value Added
- Environmental Policy
- Educational Events
- Domestic Policy (Transportation/Basis/Federal Farm Policy/Risk Management/Taxes)

NEWSWHEAT



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2020 Upcoming Events

March

9th-10th Governor's Ag Conference - Kearney, NE

April

1st-3rd Nebraska State FFA Convention - Lincoln, NE

7th Husker Food Connection - Lincoln, NE

For more information regarding upcoming events,
please contact Sarah Morton at:
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